

**Bridging Language, Identity and Integration in the Ethnic Migration- Student
Experience of China-Kazakhs in Kazakhstan**

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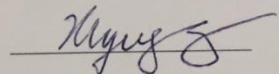
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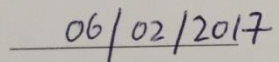
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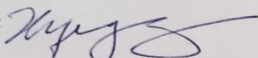
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Date: Fri, Nov 4, 2016 at 11:09 AM

Subject: Ethics Decision

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Dear Zhuldyz,

The NUGSE Research Committee reviewed the project entitled "*Language problems of Kazakh returnee students from China*" and decided:

☐ To grant approval for this study subject to minor changes, to be discussed with supervisor

Approval subject to minor changes: The study is approved subject to minor changes.
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Revise your section of risks in a way that is more helpful. Instead of ending the interviews because the participants may be stressed, one of the best ways to deal with some of the stress of participants is to make your interview questions 'friendly' enough to get the data and minimize the stress and risk.

Before starting your data collection, you need to discuss these changes with your supervisor, revise your proposal accordingly, and then ask your supervisor to check the revised proposal.

Sincerely,
NUGSE Research Committee

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

Bridging language, identity and integration in the ethnic migration- student experience
of China-Kazakhs in Kazakhstan

The Kazakhstan government launched ethnic immigration policy since becoming an independent nation. During this post-Soviet ethnic migration, ethnic Kazakhs from far abroad with limited knowledge of Russian have faced social, language and cultural challenges in their ancestral homeland. Returnee students also emerged in this migration flow. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the language challenges of ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China and their social integration in the Kazakhstani higher education institutions. Along with research problem, the research questions were framed with reasons for migration, language background, student experiences, identity and social integration of ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China. This research employed combined narrative and phenomenological inquiry approach to fruitfully provide insights of the phenomenon of being ethnic Kazakh returnee students. Sample was only chosen among ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China enrolled in the Kazakh-medium program in a Kazakhstani university with less than five years living and studying in Kazakhstan before higher education. Eight China-Kazakh returnee students were purposively selected by maximal variation sampling strategy and involved in the semi-structured interview. Major findings were that all participants migrated to Kazakhstan for maintenance of Kazakh identity, and the Kazakh language in relation to ongoing assimilation in China; all participants consistently identified themselves as Kazakh but not totally Kazakhstani or not Kazakhstani yet because of their language challenge of Russian. This study demonstrates the complex relationship between language, identity and social integration with the migration context of ethnic Kazakh returnee

students in Kazakhstan. It was anticipated that knowledge generated from the study could benefit administration and educational staff to better understand and support these typical students with long-term Russian language programs to gradually accelerate their language adaptation.

Аңдатпа

Тіл, сәйкестілік және интеграцияны этникалық көші-қонда біріктіру- Қазақстандағы Қытайдан келген қазақ студенттерінің өмір тәжірибесі

Қазақстан үкіметі тәуелсіздік алғаннан бері этникалық көші-қон саясатын жүргізе бастады. Осы посткеңестік этникалық көші-қон кезінде, алыс шеттелден келген орыс тілін меңгеру деңгейі шектеулі этникалық қазақтар өзінің тарихи отанында әлеуметтік, тілдік және мәдени қиындықтармен кездесді. Шетелден келген қандас студенттер де осы көші-қон ағынына қосылды. Осы сапалық зерттеудің мақсаты- Қазақстандық жоғары оқу орындарындағы Қытайдан келген этникалық қазақ студенттердің тілдік қиыншылықтары мен олардың әлеуметтік интеграциясын түсіну болып табылады.

Ғылыми-зерттеу мәселесіне байланысты, ғылыми-зерттеу сұрақтары Қытайдан келген этникалық қазақ студенттердің көші-қону себептерін, тіл білімі жайлы ақпараттарын, студенттік өмір тәжірибесін, сәйкестілік пен әлеуметтік интеграциясын анықтауға құрастырылған. Бұл зерттеуде этникалық қазақ қандас студент болу құбылысын толықтай түсіну үшін біріктірілген баяндау және феноменологиялық-анықтамалық әдістеме қолданылды. Зерттеуге жоғары оқу орнына түспестен бұрын Қазақстанда кемінде бес жыл тұрған және оқу тәжірибелері бар Қытайдан оралған қазақ студенттері үлгі ретінде қатысуға алынды. Қытайдан келген сегіз қазақ студенттер мақсатты түрде максималды вариация стратегиясы арқылы талдалып және әрі қарай жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбатқа шақырылды. Негізгі нәтижелер мынадай: барлық қатысушылар қазақилық пен қазақ тілін сақтау және дамыту үшін Қазақстанға қоныс аударған, сонымен қатар бұл олардың оралуы Қытайда болып жатқан ассимиляциямен байланысты. Қатысушылардың барлығы өздерін толықтай қазақпыз деп есептейді,

бірақ кейде өздерін жартылай Қазақстандықпыз немесе Қазақстандық емеспіз деп те ойлайды. Бұған олардың орыс тілімен байланысты қиындықтары себеп болды. Бұл зерттеу Қазақстандағы этникалық қазақ студенттердің көші-қон мәнмәтініндегі тіл, сәйкестілік және әлеуметтік интеграция арасындағы күрделі байланысты көрсетеді. Бұл зерттеуден алынған білім оқу орындары басшылығының және білім беру қызметкерлерінің осы типтік студенттерді жақсы түсінуіне, ұзақ мерзімді орыс тілі бағдарламаларын ұйымдастыру арқылы олардың тілдік бейімделуін бірте-бірте жеделдетуге қолдау көрсетуіне пайдасын тигізеді деп күтіледі.

Аннотация

Преодоление языка, идентичности и интеграции в этнической миграции: из опыта китайских казахов студентов в Казахстане

С момента становления независимой страной, правительство Казахстана начало проводить этническую миграционную политику. Во время этой постсоветской этнической миграции, этнические казахи из дальнего зарубежья с ограниченным знанием русского языка столкнулись с социальными, языковыми и культурными проблемами на своей исконной родине. Среди них также были студенты –репатрианты. Целью этого качественного исследования было изучение языковых проблем этнических казахских студентов–репатриантов из Китая и их социальная интеграция в казахстанских вузах. Наряду с исследовательской проблемой, вопросы исследования были сформулированы с целью выявления причин миграции, языкового происхождения, переживания студентов, идентичностью и социальной интеграцией этнических казахских студентов–репатриантов из Китая. Это исследование использовало комбинированный повествовательный феноменологический подход, чтобы дать ясное представление о феномене этнических казахских студентов-репатриантов. Выборка представляла собой этнических казахских студентов–репатриантов из Китая, обучающихся в казахских группах в Казахском университете и прожившие менее пяти лет в Казахстане до поступления в университет. Восемь казахов студентов–репатриантов из Китая были целенаправленно отобраны с использованием стратегии максимального отбора вариаций и участвовали в полуструктурированном интервью. Согласно основным результатам исследования, все участники мигрировали в Казахстан для поддержания казахской идентичности и

казахского языка в связи с продолжающейся ассимиляцией в Китае; все участники последовательно идентифицировали себя казахам, но не полностью Казахстанцами или пока не Казахстанцами из-за проблем с русским языком. Данное исследование демонстрирует сложные отношения между языком, идентичностью и социальной интеграцией в контексте миграции этнических казахских студентов–репатриантов в Казахстане. Предполагалось, что знания, полученные в ходе исследования, могут помочь административным и образовательным работникам лучше понять и поддержать этих студентов долгосрочными курсами русского языка для постепенного ускорения их языковой адаптации.

Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	xv
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Language Challenges to Integration and Identity	3
Ethnic Kazakh Returnees in University	5
Problem Statement	6
Statement of Purpose and Research Questions	7
Rationale and Significance of the Study	7
Definition of Key Terms	8
Overview of the Thesis	9
Chapter 2. Literature Review	10
Migration Context	10
Migration and social integration	10
Conceptualization of “ethnic migration”.	11
Push and pull framework.	12
Language and Identity.....	16
Identity	16
Relation between language and identity.	17
Language and identities.....	18
Social Integration	20
Conceptualization of social integration.....	20
Language and social integration.....	21
Nation, national identity and value integration	22
Kazakhstani national identity.....	23
National identity and ethnic migration.....	24
Conclusion	25
Chapter 3. Methodology.....	27
Research Design.....	28
Combined narrative and phenomenological inquiry approach in the qualitative study... ..	28
The process of research.	30
Sample.....	31

Sampling strategy.....	31
Criteria of selection of sample and research site.....	33
Research Method.....	34
Interview as the main instrument.	34
Reasons for the instrument- interview.	34
Data Analysis Approach	36
Ethical Considerations	37
Confidentiality and anonymity.....	38
Positionality	39
Conclusion	40
Chapter 4. Results	41
Stories of Migration and Language Background of Returnee Students.....	42
Murat's story.	44
Dana's story.	46
Linguistic and Social Experiences of Returnee Students.....	48
Language knowledge of Russian and Kazakh.	48
Language and social interaction challenges	49
Language learning methods.	51
Language attrition as consequence of migration.....	53
Positive social consequence of migration.	53
Self-identification and Social Integration	54
Kazakh ethnic identity.....	54
Dynamic national identity	55
Identification of native language and first language	56
Language barriers.....	56
Summary of Findings.....	57
Chapter 5. Discussion	59
RQ1	59
Finding 1	59
Finding 2	62
RQ2	63

Finding 3	63
Finding 4	64
RQ3	66
Finding 5	66
Finding 6	67
Chapter 6. Conclusion.....	70
Multiple Reasons for Migration.....	70
Linguistic Background and Self-distinction of Languages.....	71
Language Challenges	72
Ways of Language Learning and Consequence of Migration.....	72
Ethnic Identity and Social Integration Challenges.....	73
Conclusion Remark on the Conceptual Framework	73
Recommendations	74
Recommendation for administration staff.....	74
Recommendation for the Kazakhstani government	74
Recommendation for the future research	75
Researcher Reflections	75
References	77
Appendices	91
Appendix A	91
Appendix B	93
Appendix C	99

List of Tables

Table 1: The breakdown of participants.....	33
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Chapter 1. Introduction

After Kazakhstan gained independence from the Soviet Union, titular nation was both minoritized and russified. Dave and Sinnott (as cited in Amangul, 2013) depict newly independent Kazakhstani society as “russified cultural landscape” (p.110) which was evident in linguistic Russification. In particular, urban Kazakh who were taught largely in Russian spoke Russian as their first language (Oka, 2013). Apart from russified cultural and linguistic influence from the Soviet Union, minority status of Kazakhs described by Oka (2013) can be seen from 1989 demographic census in which the percentage of Kazakh population was only 39.7%, and closely followed by 37.4% Russians (Amangul, 2013).

As a newly independent state, nation-building was a foremost task of the whole country in the 1990s (Amangul, 2013; Bonnenfant, 2012; Kuşçu, 2014; Zeveleva, 2014). At the same time, a significant number of some Slavic ethnic groups emigrated from Kazakhstan which decreased the general population of Kazakhstan. Therefore, the government established an immigration policy that migrants to Kazakhstan should be Kazakh based on ethnic kinship (Oka, 2013) as part of nation-building. The president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, as the chairman of the World Kazakh Association announced an open opportunity for Kazakh diasporas and invitation to return to their historical homeland (Kalshabaeva & Seisenbayeva, 2013; Sancak & Finke, 2005) and affirmed that Kazakhstan is the only one homeland for all ethnic Kazakhs outside the territory of Kazakhstan in his speech at the first Qurultay (meeting) of the WKA in 1992 (Bonnenfant, 2012; Diener, 2005). Public speech of the President and construction of the image of “homeland” might serve as an ideological component (Zeveleva, 2014) of ethnic “return” migration program to appeal ethnic Kazakhs in the initial stage.

The immigration policy was conducted firstly in 1992 (Ashik Esik-Open Door), and adapted in 1997, 2000, and 2009 (Nurly Kosh-Blessed Migration); the law was amended for the needs of ethnic Kazakh returnees (*Oralmandar*) and solving problems that occurred in the migration process (Amangul, 2013). For example, the issue of citizenship was better solved from limiting application of ethnic Kazakhs in a five-year labor contract period to allowing for application of Kazakhstan's citizenship without labor contract. In addition, the latest immigration policy "Nurly Kosh" included more types of immigrants (Amangul, 2013). However, the procedure of citizenship application has been problematic due to the corruption of bureaucrats, discordant management of local governments and state government, and lax awareness of returnees about immigration policies and laws (Bonnenfant, 2012). "Nurly Kosh" policy has had improvement on these issues; however, "these rules and regulations are still not fulfilled accurately and totally" (Amangul, 2013, p.114) and Amangul (2013) indicated that more research is needed for ethnic Kazakhs' social integration in relation to policy changes. Moreover, these policies are pulling ethnic Kazakhs to come but it certainly caused challenges as implemented. Also, there might be other reasons why they are coming. These reasons may implicate how they experience the challenges here.

Kazakh diasporas are settled in other 40 countries besides their homeland (Amangul, 2013; Kalshabaeva & Seisenbayeva, 2013). The largest proportion of Kazakhs outside Kazakhstan 1.1 million Kazakhs live in the north-west part of China, XinJiang Uighur Autonomous Region (Cerny, 2010). For almost two decades, ethnic Kazakhs have been returning to Kazakhstan frequently from China, Mongolia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Commission on Human Rights, in Mehisto, Kambatyrova, & Nurseitova, 2014). Ethnic immigration indeed increased population and intensified the majority status of Kazakh

(Amangul, 2013; Oka, 2013). However, ethnic Kazakh returnees are linguistically, culturally and socially challenged in terms of integration in their ancestral homeland (Amangul, 2013; Barcus & Werner, 2010; Bonnenfant, 2012; Diener, 2005; Kalysh & Egamberdiyev, 2014; Kuşçu, 2014; Oka, 2013).

Language Challenges to Integration and Identity

Amangul (2013) mentioned that “one of the big problems faced by ethnic migrants is language skills (p.113)” in their social integration. Ethnic Kazakhs from different countries may have language problem in Kazakh and/or Russian. Mixed method study of Bokayev et al. (2012) revealed that 1000 ethnic Kazakhs from China, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Russia have varied proficiency of the Kazakh language in writing, reading and speaking skills, and it largely functioned as a tool of verbal communication in their host countries. Written form of the Kazakh language also differentiates in Roman, Arabic and Cyrillic alphabets for ethnic Kazakhs (Bokayev et al., 2012; Kuşçu, 2014). For China-Kazakhs, Romanized script was used among older generations and majority learned Arabic script (Cerny, 2010). Cerny (2010) stated that “it is true that children entering school in Kazakhstan and younger people will adapt more easily to Cyrillic-based Kazak so that within a generation this gap should be eliminated”(p. 239). However, this might depend on what type of schools children went to and to what degree they learned Kazakh and script, they may have more or less challenge adapting. Moreover, Kazakh returnees from non-CIS countries are not proficient in Russian (Amangul, 2013; Bokayev, 2013; Diener, 2005; Kuşçu, 2014). There is a low language competence of Russian among China-Kazakhs and Mongolia-Kazakhs, and high proficiency of host languages amid all ethnic Kazakhs (Bokayev et al., 2012).

Language problem inevitably influences social integration of ethnic Kazakh returnees. Kalysh and Egamberdiyev (2014) acknowledge that the many factors can affect the adjustment of returnees into the local society, but the most important is the language environment of the country. High function and prestige of the Russian language in the social domain use probably problematize language adjustment of ethnic Kazakhs. Diener (2005) asserts that ethnic Kazakhs with low competence of Russian encounter problematic integration and threats to their imagination of the homeland which caused some out-emigrations of this group. It seems that prior education experience of return migrants and host language environment they had might contribute to their further adaptation in Kazakhstan; for example, migrants from non-CIS countries may have never learned Russian at schools and have limited exposure to Russian.

Language challenge may impact identity construction of ethnic Kazakh returnees. Ethnic Kazakh is officially called as “*oralman*” or “returnee” (Bokayev, 2013, p.791). However, this label creates a certain gap of “otherness” that is exacerbated by the policies concerning the *oralman* and the experiences and realities of Kazakhstan-born Kazakhs (Diener, 2005). Oka (2013) wrote that “the local population often considers these immigrants as the ‘other’ and ‘not authentic’ co-ethnics, as those who have lived under the influence of different cultures for generations naturally adopt the dominant language and culture of the receiving community” (p.10). In contrast, returnees from Mongolia identify themselves as pure Kazakhs (Diener, 2009). They also deem local Kazakhs russified (Sancak, as cited in Oka, 2013) and their socio-cultural values as alien (Bokayev, 2013).

Ethnic Kazakh Returnees in University

During this post-Soviet immigration history, ethnic Kazakh returnee students from abroad also have emerged in the migration flows. In 2007, “Law on Education” legislates that “all ethnic Kazakhs have right to have education in Kazakhstan, and 2% of total state grant called as ‘Oralman quota’ is provided for all ethnic Kazakh returnee students”(Mykhibek, 2016). The benefit for education was provided by the government such as “scholarships, university entrance privileges, and free preparatory courses” (Smagulova, 2008, p.447). To apply for state grant, returnee students may need to pass equivalent entrance examination – Keshendi test. In order to prepare returnee students for the higher education, there are certainly preparatory courses; for instance, Kazakh Women’s Pedagogical University set up preparatory courses for returnee students (Kalshabaeva & Seisenbayeva, 2013). Kalshabaeva and Seisenbayeva (2013) mention that creating special conditions such as preparatory courses for all ethnic Kazakh returnee students will accelerate the integration; however, they say it is hard to offer every year. These returnee students in the higher education might also face complex experiences because of previously mentioned low competence of local languages.

Although many studies have examined adaption of ethnic Kazakh returnees, there has not been much focus on the returnee students in the universities. For example, Amangul (2013) and Barcus and Werner (2010) investigated policy influence on Mongolian-Kazakh community and their social integration; Diener (2005, 2009) conducted long-term and extensive study of Mongolian Kazakhs. Other scholars studied ethnic Kazakhs from former Soviet Union on their migration motivation (Kalshabaeva & Seisenbayeva, 2013); a case study of different migrant groups in terms of transnationalism in one Kazakhstani village including ethnic Kazakhs from China (Sancak & Finke, 2005); reasons for emigration choice

of China-Kazakh pastoralists (Shanatibieke, 2016); longitudinal study of China-Kazakhs' migration desire from the perspective of pastoralists (Cerny, 2010). While majority of participants were returnee students in the study of Bokayev et al. (2012), it did not pay much attention on the student experiences but rather general patterns of migration and integration. Obviously, ethnic Kazakh returnee students have been largely under-presented in most research. Ethnic Kazakhs from China were even poorly investigated in these studies, and Cerny's (2010) longitudinal study calls for further study of China-Kazakh returnees in Kazakhstan. Therefore, this study attempts to shed light on how ethnic Kazakh returnee students experience in the university in terms of language challenge and social integration, and how it may impact on their identity construction. It is this problem and gap of existing research that this study seeks to address.

Problem Statement

Research indicates that ethnic Kazakh returnees from non-Russian speaking background face great challenge of language socialization and integration into Kazakhstani society. Returnee students as a new migrant flow are less studied in the current research, and there is less information of how they experience language integration in the Kazakhstani universities. In the migration context, migration experience can have large impact on the integration process of immigrants. Migration experience may link to current student experiences here. In other words, pre-migration experiences of language use and educational background may drive explicit explanation for their further language experiences, and reasons for migration might deliver smooth understanding of their identity construction.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the language problems and challenges of ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China and their social integration. As a researcher and insider of this ethnic Kazakh returnees' community, I am aware that returnees from China might fluently know Kazakh but not Russian; or, neither Kazakh nor Russian. This is because the dominant language in China is Mandarin Chinese, and there is no use of Russian in daily communication. China-Kazakhs might have more exposure to Mandarin Chinese. As for the Kazakh language in education, it is only taught in minority bilingual schools (Chinese- Kazakh). China-Kazakh returnee students presumably have difficulties in their learning and communication with local students in Kazakhstan. My research focuses on ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China enrolled in the Kazakh-medium program in a Kazakhstani university with less than five years living and studying in Kazakhstan before higher education.

My research questions were framed in line with the research problem:

1. What were reasons for migration and language background of ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China?
2. How do ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China describe a student experience in Kazakh-medium higher education?
3. How do ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China identify themselves and how do they see their social integration now and in the future?

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The rationale for this study indeed generated from personal experience and desire of the researcher to help these ethnic Kazakh students to fully integrate into society and enable

the voices of returnee students be heard and expressed through the research. It also derived from Cerny's (2010) future research direction to investigate China-Kazakh returnees' experiences after moving to Kazakhstan. As there is little on returnee students in social migration and education studies, returnee students might experience unique challenges, especially in higher education which is often overlooked.

Increased understanding of these students' experiences through this study might be worth facilitating their learning process with the help of educators. The study will probably benefit administration and educational staff as one of the most relevant audiences to better support returnee students who are granted with "oralman quotas" and/or are self-paid, and to understand their experiences. These returnee students could be highly skilled human capital after the graduation and contribute to the society if much attention and strategies of language and social integration would be considered in the scope of university. Consequently, it could also benefit the society in a macro-level, and future ethnic Kazakh immigrant students who will migrate to Kazakhstan for easy adaptation.

Definition of Key Terms

Kazakh diasporas - They are ethnically Kazakhs who live abroad and possess one historical homeland- Kazakhstan (Kalshabaeva & Seisenbayeva, 2013).

Oralman- Bonnenfant (2012) defines the term as follows:

The term '*oralman*' (returning person) was originally created as a legal term in order to define the legal status, rights and privileges granted to ethnic migrants. This term is the most commonly used in the discourse of the political and cultural elite, as well as in that of the public. The word is derived from the verb '-oralu' (to return) and '-man' the nominalizing suffix in the Kazakh language. Recently, objections to the use of the

word have been voiced. The main objection to the term is that the use of a separate term is said to contribute to the further isolation of return migrants. (p.42)

This term tends to distinguish between ethnic Kazakhs from non-CIS countries and other Kazakhs from former Soviet Union (Diener, 2005). In this study, the term “returnee” or “return migrant” is used instead of “*oralman*”.

Ethnic Kazakh returnee students- This is the same equivalent to “*Oralman*” students. It refers to a group of ethnic Kazakh students from other countries who are studying in the Kazakhstani higher education institutions.

Overview of the Thesis

This thesis includes six chapters. Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter of research problem with consideration of background information, and informs the research purpose, research questions, rationale and significance of the study. Chapter 2 is devoted to the review of relevant literature to refine the conceptual frameworks. Chapter 3 justifies reasons for the method used in the study and presents data collection, sample, instrument, data analysis, ethnical concerns and positionality of the researcher. In next chapters, the findings of the present study are reported and interpreted with prior research. The sixth and final chapter of the thesis concludes from findings and provides recommendations and self-reflections.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

This research attempts to understand the experiences of ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China in terms of their language challenges and social integration. In order to shed light on the central phenomenon of being returnee students in the Kazakhstani higher education, research questions included the reasons for migration, language background, student experiences in the university, identity and social integration process of ethnic Kazakhs from China. In this chapter, I present a basic understanding of migration using the push-pull theoretical framework; language and identity including the relation between language and ethnic identity and national identity; and social integration within national identity to measure “value integration” (Kreckel, 1999).

Migration Context

It is important to understand the migration context and essence of the immigration policy to cautiously rethink reasons for migration. Based on Kazakhstan’s immigration policy, Kazakh migration from China can be understood as ethnic-oriented migration for the initial goal of nation-building. This section builds on the relation between migration and social integration, notion of ethnic migration, and push-pull theoretical framework.

Migration and social integration. Migration experience is pivotal to understand the social integration of migrants. For instance, in the comparative study of Jewish-Russian immigrant adolescents, Slonim-Nevo et al. (2006) found that migration experience influences the psychosocial adjustment of ethnic Jewish immigrants. Vathi and Duci (2016) also reinforced their finding in the migration research of ethnic Albanian children from Greece in terms of their integration; they concluded that adaptation of young return migrants is highly related to their pre-migration experience. In the same vein, Bhugra (as cited in Vathi & Duci,

2016) states that “the nature of migration (forced or voluntary), the nature of push and pull factors, and the geographical distance between home and receiving countries are considered as major factors that will moderate the effect of migration on psychosocial wellbeing”(p. 56). In particular, reasons for migration as part of migration experiences are considered through push-pull theoretical framework and research studies of ethnic migration.

Conceptualization of “ethnic migration”. Ethnic “return” migration is identified by Tsuda as second or further generations of the ethnic group who lived abroad for a long term and “return” to their ancestral homeland (as cited in Varjonen, Jurva & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2016). Tsuda (1999) explains the quoted “return” in the context of Japanese migration which described for descendants of original Japanese emigrants but not the emigrants themselves. In the Kazakhstani migration context, “not all ethnic Kazakhs currently residing beyond the borders of the contemporary territory of Kazakhstan are former refugees (or their descendants) who fled homeland to avoid political turmoil, repression, and famine under the Tsarist or Soviet regime” (Oka, 2013, p.4) which calls the attention to identify “return” migration and the “*oralman*”. It means that not all ethnic Kazakhs are indeed “returning” to their ancestral homeland. Moreover, the verb “return” may imply the discrimination according to otherness of “*oralman*” (Diener, 2005). Hence, “return” migration might not be accurate to highlight the authenticity of Kazakhstani immigration for all ethnic Kazakhs. However, in this context, the term “returnee” or “returnee students” as replacement of *oralman* or *oralman* students is commonly used and still appropriate to define this group.

In their efforts to conceptualize this specific migration, other scholars also use different terms such as “co-ethnic migration” (Muenz and Ohlinger), “return migration” (Cassarino), and “repatriation” (as cited in Zeveleva, 2014, p.809). The term “repatriation”

was employed in the migration program for refugees or convicts in most post-war countries (Zeveleva, 2014). Ethnic Kazakh returnees are not identified as refugees and the use of “repatriation” may construct a negative image of the Kazakhstani ethnic immigration process in comparison to convicts and refugees. Wessendorf (2007) conceptualizes “roots migration” to emphasize the transnational ties of the descendants of Swiss-Italian immigrants to their homeland and nostalgia of ethnic Italian immigrants which drive their migration back to Italy. “Roots migration” might be akin to most ethnic migration of second or further generations in the context of Japanese-Brazilian or “Nikkei” (Takenaka, 1999), ethnic Germans or “Aussiedler” (Dietz, 1999), and ethnic Kazakhs or “*oralman*”. The concept “ethnic migration” or “roots migration” might fit the type of Kazakhstani immigration policy.

Push and pull framework. There are a number of migration theories for exploring the cause of migration. Massey et al. (as cited in Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014) emphasize the importance of multiple theories on understanding of the migration “at different levels of analysis” (p.52). Several theories can be used based on the nature of context and by variety of analysis but not all the theories can be used together (Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014). With the purpose of better understanding the cause of migration and reasons for migration of China-Kazakh returnee students, push-pull framework is being used to obtain insights of the migration process.

Push-pull framework focuses on the major factors of migration in macro-level. Passaris (as cited in Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014) framed push-pull model with “economic factor, environmental factor and demographic factor which are assumed to push people out of places of origin and pull them into destination places” (p.28). In most cases, push factors are defined as “population growth and population density, lack of economic

opportunities and political oppression” in the sending countries; pull factors are “demand of labour, availability of land, economic opportunities and political freedom” in the receiving countries (Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014, p.28).

However, Castles, De Haas & Miller (2014) criticized that push-pull framework for being too narrow. As they argue return migration may be hard to explain by push-pull framework, and social, economic, political and institutional factors should be considered together with environmental or demographic factors. However, this framework can include these various factors and provide important insights in a particular context, such as China-Kazakhs ethnic migration in this research. In my understanding, through observing history, migration of human capital is changing rapidly which also resonates with the statement of Baynham (2011) “how we conceive of migration is liable to develop and change” (p.423). Take an example of first Estonian foreign-born immigrants’ migration to Soviet Union after World War 2, Kulu (2004) found that paradigm shift of major pushing factors in the role of migration which indicated similar pattern of previous studies; for instance, environmental factors influenced the migration between 1950s and 1960s, and then personal preferences, beliefs and background determined their migration in the 1970s and combined factors resulted in the 1980s. Personal factors also tend to push people to move to a new country. In tandem, Marksoo and Rybakovskiy (as cited in Kulu, 2004) highlight further need to study motivational background of migrants. It seems that by the time and context, environmental and individual factors are apt to push or pull migrants.

Additional factors can be contributing factors in the push-pull relationship in other international migration contexts. In the research study of German ethnic migration, Dietz (1999) defined push factors as economic and social disaggregation of host countries,

particular in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union; cultural discriminatory treatment toward German ethnicity in their lived host countries. In the Japanese ethnic migration, Japanese minority in Brazil faced economic crisis which pushed them to seek employment; at the same time, labor demands of Japan and preference of the same origin labor resources pulled ethnic Japanese to return (Tsuda, 1999). On the other hand, Tsuda (1999) discovered that transnational ties also motivate second and third generations to explore their Japanese roots in their ancestral homeland. Together, these studies highlight the need for an alternative approach to consider other shared factors in the push and pull framework. Therefore, push and pull framework can be adapted to consider in the certain contexts.

In the Kazakhstani ethnic migration, declaration of one homeland for all ethnic Kazakhs overseas and announcement of ethnic immigration policy may function as intrinsic motivation in a broad level to pull ethnic Kazakhs to migrate. This view is supported by Zeveleva (2014) who wrote that amendment of education, language policy on revitalizing Kazakh and immigration policy, balancing “Kazakhstani national identity and ethnic Kazakh identity”(p.821); and financial support in the implementation of migration program construct ideological and practical components of migration. All these components form political factors, social factors and economic factors which can be recognized as the pulling factor for all ethnic Kazakh returnees.

In respect to the pushing factor of ethnic Kazakhs’ migration, Kalshabaeva and Seisenbayeva (2013) mentioned limited access to Kazakh in host countries of returnees can push them to “return”, and they listed other reasons for migration of ethnic Kazakhs from post-Soviet countries. For example, Uzbekistan-Kazakhs moved to Kazakhstan because of conflict of border issue and less educational access in their mother tongue, which is also akin

to Turkmenistan-Kazakhs' migration choice for a bright future of younger generations; Tajikistan-Kazakhs immigrated to homeland under social, economic and political factors such as Civil war, and some Tajikistan-Kazakhs with financial difficulties there were not able to return; Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhs had strong desire to return (Kalshabaeva & Seisenbayeva, 2013). Considering all of this evidence, it seems that political, social, educational, economic and motivational factors serve in the pushing model for returnees from former Soviet Union. Similarly, Bokayev (2013) found that reunion of family, better education and future, and ethnic Kazakh kinship were reasons for migration of China-Kazakhs, Mongolia-Kazakhs, Uzbekistan-Kazakhs, Tajikistan-Kazakhs, Turkmenistan- Kazakhs, and Russia-Kazakhs.

As for China-Kazakhs' emigration choice, Cerny (2010) identified two main characteristics from the perspective of pastoralists: for preserving their own ethnic identity and avoiding assimilation into Chinese identity as well as Uighurs who worry about the language loss, which were also found in the study of Sancak and Finke (as cited in Sancak & Finke, 2005). It appears that China-Kazakhs see threats to their ethnic identity construction and mother tongue education in the scope of Chinese language policy toward minorities particular in Western China. Also, the practical status of the Kazakh language in current Chinese education system raised language concern of most Kazakhs (Shanatibieke, 2016). Cerny (2010) also highlighted that China-Kazak pastoralists sought to get land in Kazakhstan to continue their households, because Chinese government enforced nomads to be sedentary which was similar to the Soviet former social practices. Furthermore, Sancak and Finke (as cited in Sancak & Finke, 2005) and Shanatibieke (2016) mentioned that China-Kazakhs choose to migrate for the sake of investment for the benefit of future generations and birth limitation policy in China. Generally, sedentary households, monolingual language policy and

access to mother tongue are push factors for China-Kazakhs ethnic migration. Their reasons of pre-migration were well explained in a meso-level from the perspective of pastoralists; however, there remain several aspects of personal motivation factors of returnee students which relatively little is known. And the peculiarities of pastoralists highlight that it might be special for returnees for education.

Language and Identity

As my research study looks upon China-Kazakh returnee students' experiences in terms of identity and language challenges, it is worth identifying the relationship between identity and language, and how language affects the identity formation of individuals in other similar settings from previous research. In the ethnic migration context, national identity and ethnic identity might be both important to understand.

Identity. It is necessary to firstly define the meaning of identity for further discussion on the language and identity. Identity is a broad category of “self” which defined by scholars in different meanings. Shoemaker (2006) defines identity as “entities possessed, and sometimes lost, by individuals, usually persons” (p.41). He also conceptualizes “identity” and “identities” in respect to philosophical thinking perspectives; the identity is essential and identities are changeable. However, his explanation of rationale behind identity and identities and their relation is somehow abstract. In contrast to “possession and lost”, Norton (as cited in Barkhuizen & de Klerk, 2006) frames identity as the following:

How people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future ... Identity relates to desire—the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, and the desire for security and safety. (p.279)

Norton's definition of identity highlights the dynamic construction of identity rather than fixed positioning of individuals; the "desire" derives from own understanding of individuals. Consistent with the purpose of the study, I found Norton's definition of identity is highly relevant to social integration to be "recognized and affiliated" for both social identities. Ethnic identity and national identity are all regard as social identity of individuals and their self-concepts among ethnic group and nation in the sociology (Varjonen, Arnold, & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2013). In the ethnic migration, national identity is crucial to understand the integration which will also be discussed later.

Relation between language and identity. Much of the literature on language and identity investigated from different perspectives. In his introduction of language and identity from historical perspectives Joseph (2016) notes the central role of language on the identity construction: identity can be mostly revealed in the way of people speak what language, and such language use can index sense of belongings. And he pinpoints two different notions of relationship between language and identity in the most research: "constructed-intersubjectively" and "context-contingently" (p.22). While "construct-intersubjectively" takes account of co-construction of changeable identities between subjects, "context-contingently" implies the co-construction of different identities of the same individual in various circumstances (Joseph, 2016). Furthermore, Baxter (2016) identifies different positions on the relationship between language and identity; she encapsulates the discursive construction of identities from positioning perspective and a core essence of individual identity; this also reflects on the single identity and plural identifies of Shoemaker (2006). Norton and Toohey (2011) evaluate that poststructuralist perspective is influential to our understanding of the fluidness of identities and negotiation of individuals' desire to be

identified in a particular context. Generally speaking, subjectivity and dynamic nature of identities were all highlighted by these scholars.

Language and identities. Ethnic identity and national identity can be understood by Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) given definition. They emphasize "sameness and difference" which imply on the metaphor of identification of "us" and "them". They noted that "the first of these allows for individuals to imagine themselves as a group, while the second produces social distance between those who perceive themselves as unlike"(Bucholtz & Hall,2004, p.369) which also can be applicable to any social identities, especially in the scope of ethnicity or nation.

There were two classical dichotomies on the language and ethnic identity: essentialist and constructionist. Essentialist means situated relationship between language and ethnic identity; ethnic identity can be transferable with the language in the framework of constructionist (Lytra, 2016). Harris and Rampton (as cited in Lytra, 2016) comment that two concepts have very fine difference. On the other hand, these views did not clearly highlight on the knowledge of the language; and how ethnic group position themselves can depend on the power, ideology and other factors.

Several studies show how ethnic migrants position themselves in relation to their languages. According to Hecht (2012), knowledge of the language greatly impacts the identity formation; ethnic identity is dual-dimensionally positioned from the view of insiders and outsiders, and can be categorized as inter-ethnic identity and intra-ethnic identity. Hecht (2012) found that for ethnic Toba, knowledge of the Toba language is related to their identity but not as a final determinant; however, other ethnic groups interpret language competence of Toba as a key measure of ethnic identification of Toba community. De Fina (2014) found a

similar relationship between language and identity in Italian Americans. Italian immigrants declined their use of Italian as they spoke English more as a result of monolingual movement. However, as Italians became more aware of their language, the community began to code-mix Italian with English or switch among those languages in their utterance to index their ethnic identity (De Fina, 2014). For both Toba-Argentina and Italian-American communities, language is the symbol of their ethnic identity; however, language competence is not the determined factor in their self-positioned ethnic identity.

Language proficiency is certainly important in the national identity construction of migrants in the receiving countries. For instance, Barkhuizen and de Klerk (2006) described that low language proficiency of English of Afrikaans-speaking preimmigrants can challenge their future life experience in New Zealand through their discourses of imagination and expectation. In order to improve their chances of integrating, they imagine and position themselves as New Zealanders, placing importance on learning English. Similarly, ethnic Fins from Russia being Russian-speaking group encountered positioning challenge of their identities in Finland; they see themselves as Fins in Russia but were positioned as Russians by local Fins in their homeland (Varjonen, Arnold, & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2013). In contrast to migrants' view, insiders of the country may have different perspective on the language and national identity. Considering Ukrainian national identity which is quite similar to Kazakhstan's case, majority of Ukraine-born Russian speakers with less knowledge and use of the Ukrainian national language still identify themselves as Ukrainian despite their linguistic indexicality (Kulyk, 2016). Generally speaking, the knowledge of language is complicated in the construction of ethnic or national identity for both insiders and outsiders.

As for ethnic Kazakhs, there are relatively few studies on the relationship between language and ethnic identity of returnees. Bokayev et al. (2012) found that returnees perceive the Kazakh language as their mother tongues from their traditional experiences even though they have diverse fluency of the language. Kalysh and Egamberdiyev (2014) examined the identification of native language among ethnic Kazakhs from Uzbekistan, Mongolia, China, Turkmenistan, Russia and Tajikistan; majority of returnees reported Kazakh as their native language, and it varied among Russian and Tajik for the rest. However, these studies do not consider the relation between language and ethnic identity, language and national identity for the social integration.

Social Integration

As this study intends to explore social integration of returnee students, conceptions of social integration, value integration, and nation are outlined within Kazakhstani and international case. Together with these concepts, I present how social integration, value integration and language integration connect in the ethnic migration.

Conceptualization of social integration. There have been multiple explanations of social integration. Eurostat (as cited in Nieuwboer & van't Rood, 2016) defines the social integration as “functional adjustment to a foreign society, including employment, education, social inclusion, and active citizenship” (p.30). Kreckel (1999) conceptualizes value (moral) integration to distinct from system integration, and social integration contains system integration and value integration. System integration highlights on the “money and power”; value integration means “a common national identity, solidarity, sentiments of belonging and togetherness” (Kreckel, 1999, p.7). Sul and Song (as cited in Kim et al., 2016) propose that value integration is the final goal of integration process.

In Kazakhstani ethnic migration, the integration framework was also included in the legislation. According to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Population Migration (1997; as cited in Bonnenfant, 2012), integration means for “a sustained mutual interaction between newcomers and the societies that receive them” (p.39) and the law regulated the different periods of adaptation support for return migrants. However, these promises for facilitating integration of ethnic Kazakhs were not fulfilled in the reality (Diener, 2005; Kuşçu, 2014) and also in the local governments (Bokayev, 2013).

Language and social integration. Much of the current literature emphasize the importance of language in the social integration for migrants (Bonnenfant, 2012; Diener, 2005; Ilimkhanova et al., 2014; Kalysh & Egamberdiyev, 2014; Kuşçu, 2014; Pujolar, 2016; Remennick, 2004; Vathi & Duci, 2016). Pujolar (2016) writes that

When they settle in a new context, the linguistic capital they possessed in their place of origin is, to put it in this way, reevaluated according to local hierarchies, most often devaluated, such that immigrants must somehow endeavor to acquire the linguistic capital that is locally needed to access symbolic and economic goods. (p.305)

In relation to Kazakhstani language use, “Russian is viewed as reliable linguistic capital” in most domains (Smagulova, 2006, p.314). In tandem, the trilingual policy of the country also implies the necessary knowledge of Kazakh and Russian, and an indicator of successful integration for ethnic Kazakh returnees (Bokayev, 2013). This may challenge the language socialization of ethnic Kazakhs with limited knowledge of Russian.

Linguistic integration was underlined among other international immigrants in parallel to Kazakhstani returnees. Immigrant students from China studying in the UK reported language and other cultural and context-related problems in their social integration; limited

language proficiency of English also contributed to problematic integration to some extent (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2016). It is akin to Benson's (2016) study of Chinese immigrant students in New Zealand, language and cultural aspect are challengeable in their adaptation. Likewise, Gogonas and Michail (2015) argue that high language proficiency of Greek yield an integrative attitude for second generations of Albanian immigrants and reshaped their identity; they deem Greek as one part of their identity. In the study of ethnic Jewish immigrants from Russia, Remennick (2004) investigated language acquisition of immigrants for their economic and social integration. She found that language competence plays importance role of basis and result in the social integration; at the same time, it generates a new ethnic identity among Russian Israeli immigrants (Remennick, 2004). Together, these studies indicated that language competence of migrants influences the integration process; identity is reconstructed in the social integration of migrants with high language proficiency. Therefore, the value integration (Kreckel, 1999) might be hard for ethnic Kazakhs because of language problem.

Nation, national identity and value integration. For value integration, the notion of nation must be important to understand national identity. A number of scholars conceptualized "nation" differently. In 1977, Seton-Watson gives a fuzzy definition of nation which emphasizes on "solidarity, a common culture, a national consciousness" among a group of people (as cited in Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014, p.65). Castles et al. (2014) comment this definition hardly can distinguish "nation" from an ethnic group. In 1998, Triandafyllidou states that "the nation is a group of people who share with one another more things in common than they share with outsiders" (p. 598) and "the only legitimate source of political power "(p. 593) which emphasize the relationship to others and power. These two definitions

highlight the importance of “cultural roots” (Anderson, 2006), power, sense of belongings of the nation, and significance of others. Indeed, the definition of nation might be hard to capture specifically. However, in 2006, Anderson adds a nation is “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (p.6). In line with his explanation, firstly, members of this imagined community had no knowledge of most their fellows but had imagined them existing in their mind of the community. Also, the community is limited in the boundaries among others. Of importance, this imagined community possesses power and freedom. It also implies that any ethnic group which accomplishes these conditions can also alter to the level of nation (Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014). Generally, all of them provide valuable insights on the notion of nation to some extent, and existence of interchange of ethnic groups and nations.

National identity might be a core element in the formation of a nation and value integration (Kreckel, 1999) of migrants. Sense of belongings in this imagined political community possibly form its own self-identification and distinct from foreigners or others. In the negotiation process of national identity, others signify this different self-conception. Also, culture, religion or language is an essential element to identify a nation and distinguish one nation from others (Triandafyllidou, 1998). In relation to others, Rodriguez et al. (2010) present ethnic pluralism model and social dominance theory in their investigation of immigrant generation’s perceptions toward American national identity. National identity is formed within their personal and ethnic identity; these identities impact understanding of national identity for individuals (Rodriguez, Schwartz & Krauss Whitbourne, 2010).

Kazakhstani national identity. Kazakhstan in its nation-building process is shifting from ethnic national identity to civic national identity (Diener, 2009) and facing difficulties in

construction of its national identity (Kuşçu, 2014). According to Principles of Formation of State Identity of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1996), “Kazakhstan is the land of Kazakhs who speak Kazakh and Kazakhs are ‘the state-forming nation’” (as cited in Smagulova, 2008, p.449) which sheds light on Kazakh-oriented nationalization. The most recent change is the term “Kazakhstani” which “...presents an attempt to provide an inclusive patriotic but not ethnically neutral identity couched within a constitutional principle of territorial citizenship” (Diener, 2009, p. 211). However, Diener (2009) states that the new inclusive identity was debated among nationalists. As for language and identity, Kazakh identity has highly persisted despite of low status of the Kazakh, and the Kazakh language was identified as native language among russified or rural Kazakhs in the mid-1980s (All-Union Census; as cited in Smagulova, 2008).

National identity and ethnic migration. In the context of ethnic migration, national identity is somehow challenged by the same roots out-groups from the perception of insiders of the nation (Seol & Skrentny, 2009). A large and growing body of research had investigated hierarchical nationhood in different migration contexts (Seol & Skrentny, 2009; Triandafyllidou & Veikou, 2002). In respect to hierarchical nationhood, discrimination and marginalization are also highlighted in the “roots” migrants (Varjonen, Jurva & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2016; Yamanaka, 1996). Tsuda (2009) reminds us that immigrants are often socially and economically marginalized and discriminated in their re-settled foreign countries. According to Seol and Skrentny (2009), “roots” migrants within another citizenship could not equally own the rights although they were somehow preferred over foreigners. For example, ethnic Koreans from China or Joseonjok are excluded from membership of nation due to geopolitical pressure of China and economic interest of Korean government, and American

Koreans are more welcomed than Joseonjok (Seol & Skrentny, 2009). Similarly, ethnic Japanese returnees from Peru or Brazil are discriminated and aliened in their ancestral homeland (Yamanaka, 1996), and they identified themselves as Nikkei which ties to their transnational community and avoids assimilation in the host countries (Takenaka, 1999). Finish ethnic returnees from Russia are less preferred than Fins from America within discrimination for both groups (Varjonen, Jurva & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2016).

Relocating to ethnic Kazakh returnees, they are also discriminated and marginalized in their so-called homeland (Kuşçu, 2014; Diener, 2005). Diener (2005) points out the legal restrictions for “returnees” in the political level. Likewise, Oka (2013) observes that ethnic Kazakhs from non-former Soviet Union are labeled as “others” for Russian-speaking Kazakhs; Kuşçu (2014) also argues that the classification of “oralman” exacerbated the social exclusion of ethnic Kazakhs. As for China-Kazakhs, they are categorized as “second-class citizen” due to incomplete preparedness and integration (Cerny, 2010, p.240). As a result, return migrants in their imagined homeland are challenged by social marginalization and negative positioning from outsiders. This would impact on their value integration and understanding of the nation. However, how China-Kazak returnees self-position themselves in their homeland and to what degree they identify with integrative national identity are less known.

Conclusion

In sum, the available literature suggests that the relationship between language, identity and social integration among immigrants is complicated. In the push-pull framework oriented ethnic migration, language and national identity were combined to understand value and social integration; language and identity were added to understand ethnic identity. All these concepts integrated to understand how language impact value integration, to what extent

migration motivation affect identity construction and social integration of returnee students in their ancestral homeland. Furthermore, although prior research has examined the language and ethnic identity among ethnic Kazakhs, there has been little attention paid to the degree of national identity which contributes to value integration (Kreckel, 1999). Finally, despite the multiple research of adaptation of ethnic Kazakhs, ethnic Kazakh returnee students are less represented in recent research.

Chapter 3. Methodology

In the previous chapter, I have reviewed the literatures that relate to the current study. This chapter purposively elucidates the rationale behind my choosing of combined narrative and phenomenological inquiry approach for this study. In the light of research problem, this type of qualitative study aimed to explore the student experience of ethnic Kazakh returnees from China in higher education, both the language aspect and social integration. The proceeding research questions were formulated which built on the research purpose to discover the phenomenon of being ethnic Kazakh returnee students:

1. What were reasons for migration and language background of ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China?
2. How do ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China describe a student experience in Kazakh-medium higher education?
3. How do ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China identify themselves and how do they see their social integration now and in the future?

The content of this chapter is outlined in six major sections. In the first section, I will define justification of combined narrative and phenomenological inquiry approach and the process of my research study in general. In the next section, sampling strategy and sample of my study will be illustrated. In the third section, I will present and reason out the research method in relation to my study. Approach of data analysis will be briefly demonstrated in the subsequent section. In the last two sections, I depict ethical concerns and my positionality as a member of this community, having emigrated from China.

Research Design

Combined narrative and phenomenological inquiry approach in the qualitative study. I employed a qualitative research methodology to gain insights into the experiences of returnee students because as defined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research focuses on “... understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences...rather than determining the cause and effect, predicting, or describing the distribution of some attribute among a population” (p.5-6). In my understanding, qualitative research approach is simply a better fit for my research problem. Comprehension of lived experiences of returnee students regarding language challenges and social integration might be hard to capture through dealing with variables in a quantitative study, especially when the study requires a thorough understanding of the context (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative study tends to be more interactive to approach participants, and researchers can converse with their participants to acquire full insights of the issue. Moreover, my study includes exploration of the experiences of participants, and empowerment of individuals in relation to their stories and voice heard as described by Creswell (2013) as essential reasons for choosing qualitative inquiry.

Consistent with justification of research design, researchers in the field of ethnic migration studies also conducted qualitative research. For example, Cerny (2010) interviewed the Kazakh diasporas in XinJiang, western China for her study of their emigration to Kazakhstan; Varjonen et al. (2013) used focus group interview to explore the current experience of ethnic Fins immigrants from Russia, Canada and America; Vathi and Duci (2016) used qualitative study to explore psychological adaptation experience of ethnic Albanian return immigrant children from Greece by interview and observation, and they argue

the need for qualitative research of migration and psychological wellbeing of children and young people.

Since employing a qualitative design, I found combined narrative and phenomenological inquiry approach (Patterson, 2016) to be best suited to answer my research questions. Creswell (2013) explicates that “narrative study reports the stories of experiences of a single individual or several individuals, a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon”(p.76). Also, according to Patterson (2016), he separately narrated five teacher’s professional learning experiences, and explored the meaning behind the phenomenon of teacher’s professional development. All his attempts of combined two approaches were consistent with his purpose of the study: to understand their personal learning experience and the process of professional development. In other words, personal stories formed further understanding of meaning of professional development and perceptions of teachers. This is also akin to my study to fully explore the experiences of ethnic Kazakh returnee students within their migration background.

In this study, the objective is not only simply to retell the stories of returnee students, but also to distill the meanings from experiences and to interpret the meanings of phenomenon of being returnee students which demand phenomenological research to explore. In the same vein, I could present migration and language background of returnee students by narrative stories, and explore student experience in the university together in order to fully understand the phenomenon. In this context, ethnic Kazakh students returned to their native land for reasons and had certain language backgrounds. These elements construct a story line of returnee students before they came to the university which notifies me to use modified

narrative oral history inquiry approach. This personal story of migration enabled me to describe reasons for migration and language background of returnee students from China in a narrative form.

As for choosing phenomenological approach for my second and third research questions, three main reasons are found to refine their experience here in the Kazakhstani higher education and their integration. Firstly, my second broad research question aimed to explore lived experiences of China-Kazakhs in higher education, generally what they have experienced as being returnee students. These shared experiences of several participants are one of key characteristics of phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013). Secondly, my study intended to emphasize on the phenomenon of being returnee students. “A single concept or idea” can be the phenomenon to be studied (Creswell, 2013, p. 78), such as being returnee students in Kazakhstani higher education. In addition, the concept “being-in-the-world” was addressed by Heidegger (as cited in Wilding & Whiteford, 2005) as the foci of the interpretive phenomenology which emphasizes on the interconnection between human life and the context such as being returnees and lived context in my study. Thirdly, rather than solely retelling the story of participants, I attempt to present essential meaning of phenomenon by “‘what’ they have experienced and ‘how’ they experienced it” (Creswell, 2013, p.79) through subjective information. The meaning of essence entails “what means for being returnee students in higher education” in this exploratory research. Thus, combined narrative and phenomenological inquiry approach ultimately provide a clear understanding of shared experience of returnee students.

The process of research. Process of research is briefly discussed by the following steps. First I construed a research problem and sketched out the research purpose. In line with

the research purpose, I developed research questions to attain insight into the experiences of participants including language issues and social integration, and then the instrument was decided on the basis of research purpose. I developed 27 interview questions based on research questions and translated into Kazakh and Mandarin as my participants are more familiar with these two languages.

After getting approval from NUGSE Research Ethics Committee, I started my data collection on December 5, 2016. Before approaching my participants, I contacted one faculty member who later acted as my gatekeeper. The gatekeeper provided me a valid contact list of potential participants which successfully enabled me to find my needed participants. Even though the time period was examination for both undergraduate and graduate students, eight participants voluntarily agreed to partake in this research. Indeed, the initial planned number of participants was nine, but one informant refused to participate due to stressful exam period. Interviews were all conducted in the auditoriums or cafeterias on the research site for the convenience of participants. With two participants, we had follow-up informal conversation to clarify certain facts on their language background. Data of interviews were then transcribed and coded for analysis; and analysis and interpretation will be explained later in details.

Sample

Sampling strategy. To recall my research purpose, experiences of returnee students are main research objective to understand in this study. Thus, ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China in Kazakhstani higher education are target population of the study. In order to fully identify and interpret the central phenomenon, I concur with Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) emphasize on the purposive sampling that researcher "must select a sample from the most which can be learned" (p.96).

Based on my personal experience and familiar knowledge of the context, I decided to use maximal variation sampling strategy. Main reason for choosing this strategy, as described by Creswell (2014), is for inclusion of various views. In tandem, the context furnished me with a variety of characteristics of sample. For example, new-coming returnee students enrolled in the undergraduate program; or graduate students, especially those who completed their bachelor education in China. Scholarship is not available for all returnee students, and it again reminds me that different traits of population are vital to consider in my choice.

I defined the different characteristics of sample on the basis of my contextual knowledge and divided them into four groups: four returnee students in the undergraduate program with scholarship, three self-paid returnee students in the undergraduate program, one returnee graduate student with scholarship and one self-paid returnee graduate student (only Master students), and this tends to reflect general tendencies of returnee students in the school. Maximum ten individuals are suggested for conducting phenomenological research by researchers (Boyd, Creswell; as cited in Groenewald, 2004). Total number of planned participants was nine which could ensure me with obtaining rich data. However, eight participants were involved in the research study; there was one graduate student with scholarship who withdrew from the study. Here, distribution of participants is included as below:

Table 1

The breakdown of participants

Code for the participants	Pre-experience	Studying program	Gender	Scholarship status
001-Maksat	2 years	undergraduate, 2 nd year	M	self-paid
002-Murat	3 years	undergraduate, 2 nd year	M	grant
003-Aigerim	1.5 years	undergraduate, 2 nd year	F	self-paid
004-Ainur	3 years 4 months	undergraduate, 2 nd year	F	grant
005-Dana	5 months	graduate, 1 st year	F	self-paid
006-Anar	2 years 5 months	undergraduate, 2 nd year	F	grant
007-Beibit	4 years	undergraduate, 2 nd year	M	self-paid
008-Saule	2.5 years	undergraduate, 2 nd year	F	grant

Criteria of selection of sample and research site. The essential criteria for sample selection is ethnic Kazakh students from China enrolled in the Kazakh-medium program with/without prior experience living and studying in Kazakhstan before higher education, and the participants who had no more than 5 years of prior study in Kazakhstan at secondary or tertiary level. Based on my prior knowledge of the context, participants who have stayed in Kazakhstan with more than five years tend to be more integrative and face less language challenges in comparison to new-comers. Time limit was set for exploring social integration. Also, students in Kazakh medium were chosen because overwhelming majority of recent migrants chose Kazakh medium. According to the criteria, I contacted all around twenty potential participants by mobile phone from the list provided by the gatekeeper. Less than half of informants agreed to participate in the research. Moreover, research site selected for this study was a public university located in Northern Kazakhstan. Research site offered ease

access to sample. This is because in general returnee students who get the state scholarship tend to study in the public university for high ranking and possible benefits for future employment.

Research Method

Interview as the main instrument. In the section above, I described the research design and sample generally. In this section, I will present research method in details and explain reasons for using interview as my instrument. In the data collection, I only used the interview as a key method to obtain insights and understanding from participants. Specifically, one-on-one face-to-face semi-structured interview was employed in my study.

Consistent with research questions, interview questions were framed in the interview protocol (see Appendix A). I interviewed eight participants one at a time for around 30-60 minutes. These conversations were all recorded with permission of participants on my personal mobile phone. During the interview, some of my participants wandered off topic and I endeavored to remind them the questions again. To avoid the controlling of interviewer's view, one participant asked my opinion and I told the informant that we could have a discussion after the interview. Participants were all open and willing to share their experiences, and follow-up questions were raised in the interview. The most interesting thing was that one participant even was keen on stating his/her real name in the final report. Perhaps, research studies were positively considered by people here. To maintain the ethics of research process, I still evoked the real names of all participants in favor of pseudonyms; this issue will be discussed more thoroughly in one of following sections.

Reasons for the instrument- interview. There are some determining factors for using one-on-one semi-structured interview in my study. Firstly, I will explain the reason for a

qualitative interview. The main method of phenomenological research is “...typically interviewing individuals who have experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p.79). Brinkman and Kvale (2015, p.32) also highlight 12 traits of “semi unstructured life world interview” based on phenomenological approach, probing the meaning from lived experience. Understanding that I aimed to explore the experiences of China-Kazakh returnee students and know the meaning of the phenomenon through their perspectives, interview is appropriate for my study. For instance, interview allows participants to address their voice directly in an open-ended question setting. In comparison with other method, observation may limit me to discover feelings and interpretation of the people as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016).

Second, I will present how one-on-one interview provides best opportunity to collect data for my study. One-on-one interview is similar to interpersonal interaction, where being possible to explore how participants interpret and being less interruptive from the third party. Participants are given more space to share their thoughts here. In the qualitative interview, lived experience as a sensitive topic might be more confidential to share between interviewer and interviewee, and for this, a good rapport with participants is a must which empowers them to be open to share.

The final factor for the structure of interview is to get rich information. I chose to conduct semi-structured interview as opposed to structured interview and unstructured interview for a number of reasons. For instance, structured interview might be limited to a specific concept, and not fit for exploratory-typed information from participants. As clarified by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), such formal interview is most for socio-demographic information, and response for a specific statement. In my study, experience of returnee students is a broad term and involves different aspects including social and educational

background, self-identity and integration. As a researcher, I am not simply searching for particular demographic data, but rather different perspectives of participants from described phenomenon to comprehend. In line with my research purpose, highly structured interview may impede me to explore what I want to know for the meaning of phenomenon. Another type of interview, unstructured interview is somehow challenging for novice researchers even though it is more exploratory; it requires high interviewing skills. Hence, I have rejected to use highly structured and unstructured interviews; at the same time, it implicates that semi-structured interview is applicable for my study. As I am quite familiar with the context, I was able to formulate relevant questions which reflect on the phenomenon. Semi-structured interview also provides great flexibility to deepen understanding of the phenomenon by probing questions.

Data Analysis Approach

I described method for collecting data in the previous section. In this section, I will present how I analyzed data from interview and interpret the findings. Data analysis involved several steps. At the beginning, I transcribed interview content on my personal computer by means of repeatedly listening to the recording audios of mobile through headphones. Transcripts were all securely saved in my password-protected laptop. Instead of specific data analysis software, I tried to analyze by myself. First, I am not so sophisticated in the software analysis, and it might be time-consuming to learn how to use the software. Second, one of drawbacks of use of software is that it would exclude the emotional undertones of interview answers if handled poorly.

Learning from researchers as Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), I have immersed myself into the data, almost “living with these data” (p.11). After repeatedly reading the transcripts, I

summarized each interview and coded all the transcripts. I created categories from codes and included quotes into one specific theme, which is defined by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) as “electronic flip charts” (p.18) for frequency. Three major categories emerged: pre-migration experience, linguistic and social experiences in the Excel. By thematic analysis in a narrative inquiry, I first analyzed the migration and language background and found two typified pre-migration personal experiences. These two typical participants’ oral histories were narrated in details, and they were also representative of two different linguistic backgrounds of all participants. After finished report of their stories, I asked participants to check the story line by emails and clarify the accuracy of their personal pre-experiences.

As for the phenomenological approach, each theme was counted by the frequency of mention by participants for that I was able to highlight the most representative experience of returnee students. For one theme, I copied original quotes from participants which coincide with the theme. Quotes used for representation of participants were purposefully selected to support findings. Participants are presented by these pseudonyms: Maksat, Murat, Aigerim, Ainur, Dana, Anar, Beibit and Saule. Further, analysis of the final product will be described in the chapter of results.

Ethical Considerations

The study was fully followed the ethical principles. Initially, I wrote down my proposal for research. Based on this information, I developed the Consent Forms with translated version of Kazakh and Mandarin Chinese (see Appendix B) that was approved later by the NUGSE Research Ethics Committee. On this form, I presented my purpose of the study and general information of the research, and other ethical concerns such as confidentiality, anonymity, and potential benefits for participants. Due to special language

background of participants, consent form was translated into Kazakh and Mandarin for being easily understandable. This research was approved on November 5, 2016.

Confidentiality and anonymity. As an ethical researcher, confidentiality and anonymity are both valuable for protecting rights of participants. Measuring the importance of these two ethical concerns, I was bogged down into deep thought. Plato's word lightened me, he said that "rules must always be understood contextually" (as cited in Brinkman and Kvale, 2015, p.92). In my study, confidentiality might be more vital for participant's right to privacy. Information was gathered from lived experiences of returnee students, and this special sample might be recognizable in the broad setting. In this vein, I as a researcher took precautions to data analysis and report release. Furthermore, the access to data needed to be carefully considered in order to prevent it from disclosure. Thus, it is pivotal to guarantee confidentiality.

Regarding confidentiality, data safety is guaranteed by keeping in my own password-protected computer, and only available for researcher and thesis advisor. Information confidentiality is assured by careful identification of participants in writing and permanent destruction of raw data after completing the whole thesis. Generally, during the interview and data collection, I have not encountered any severe ethical challenges.

As for anonymity, it also helps researchers to keep identification of participants secure. However, it can be more easily guaranteed in the form of pseudonyms or numeric codes of participants, from the start of data collection to the final report. In the data collection, there had been one participant who wished to recall his/her name in the final report. Obviously, crediting their identification acts a mean of claiming original voice but will not be appeared in the report.

In the Ethics Form and entire process of research, anonymity is ensured by codes as “001” or pseudonyms assigned for participants and without indicating the research site. Names or any identifiers were removed from transcripts and audios. While recording the interview in the data collection, I had not recalled their names. Research site is kept anonymous for being easily recognizable.

Positionality

Being an immigrant student in the university, learning might be a new adventure. Particularly for students who even have different language backgrounds, adventure is risky but meaningful. That’s what I heard from returnee students. They have been telling me that they gained something important from new experiences. In some instance, some of them emphasized great improvement of their mother tongue. Those who were taught in Chinese-medium schools, they had superficial understanding of their native language- Kazakh. Language learning is one aspect of their student experience in Kazakhstan.

I am also one of returnees and insider of this community. I learned Kazakh and Russian through years of stay in Kazakhstan. As a researcher involved in a research which interested me most, I have a strong passion to explore this topic. As a returnee student, I was cautious about being unbiased and objective in the study. Researching what you thought about these experiences might be familiar but indeed it can be something unexpected. That may be the reason why every story of individual is meaningful to hear; diversity of experiences can let the explorer reach another peak. Through interviews with participants, I got into their stories as more an outsider to hear their voices and gain insights from these lived experiences. As a close insider and outsider, this research is the core mission for me to address their voices and needs. This is because that new adventure for returnee students may be challengeable, and

it may need outsiders, especially educators, to understand and support to restrain the adventure from being over-risky.

Conclusion

In sum, this chapter presents the detailed process of research and justification for combined narrative and phenomenological inquiry approach on the language challenges and social integration of China-Kazakh returnee students. Research process can be clearly seen from inclusion of sample, method, data analysis approach and ethical issues. Interpretation of data will be fully discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Results

In the previous chapter, reasons for employing combined narrative and phenomenological inquiry approach were discussed. In this chapter, I will present my analysis and the findings which emerged from data. In order to understand the findings presented later, I will restate my research purpose and research questions here. The research study focused on the exploration of China-Kazakh returnee students' experiences in the higher education in relation to language and social integration. For understanding their experiences, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What were reasons for migration and language background of ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China?
2. How do ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China describe a student experience in Kazakh-medium higher education?
3. How do ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China identify themselves and how do they see their social integration now and in the future?

Consistent with chosen methodology, the results from interview data analysis are mainly divided into three sections: (a) stories of migration and language background of returnee students; (b) linguistic and social experiences of returnee students; (c) self-identification and social integration. In order to better understand the phenomenon of being ethnic Kazakh returnee students in Kazakhstani higher education, their motivation for migration and language background will be exemplified in a narrative form. Major findings related to the second and the third research questions will be presented after description of pre-experience of migration.

Stories of Migration and Language Background of Returnee Students

To understand returnee students' experiences in higher education in Kazakhstan, it is important to be familiarized with the context of the migration and pre-university experience. In line with the first research question of the study, this section explores China-Kazakh returnee students' reasons for migration and language background in detail. These stories of migration would provide a basis for further understanding of student experience. The reason for migration is interrelated to their sense of cultural belonging; language background also indicates how they learn languages and overcome the language challenges at their university in Kazakhstan. Thus, this section will provide the smooth comprehension of proceeding findings.

Overall impetuses for return migration of these students were identified as follows: maintenance of Kazakh identity, and concerns of native language and assimilation process in China. All eight participants expressed the need to preserve their sense of cultural belonging and identity as members of Kazakh ethnic community and it made them come to their ancestral homeland. On this point, all participants described that language loss was predictable due to frequent use of Mandarin Chinese in daily life in China; it consequently threatens to Kazakh identity. Chinesation (to become Han Chinese) is evitable after the loss of language and ethnic identity. Ainur commented that, "I spoke Mandarin Chinese purely at home, in the street, and at school. After all you will lose your tongue and become Han Chinese. That's why my father sent me here and he is teacher of Kazakh literature (laughter)". As another participant Aigerim put it, "I came here to be Kazakh. I learned Mandarin Chinese for 12 years, and my father sent me here to learn Kazakh"(translation from Kazakh and Mandarin Chinese to English from transcript, December, 2016).

Language background of returnee students is identified through their previous educational experience and language use in China. There were two different school-typed experiences: participants from Han-Majority schools, and participants from bilingual schools. Five out of eight participants (Aigerim, Beibit, Dana, Maksat, and Saule) went to Han-Majority schools. These schools used Mandarin Chinese as medium of instruction from primary school level to high school level, and introduced English as a subject. At those schools, minority students did not learn their native languages even as a subject. Another three participants (Anar, Ainur, and Murat) had attended bilingual schools in different stages. According to data, Ainur had subtractive bilingual education (García, 2009); she studied in Kazakh as medium of instruction till Grade 3; Grade 4-6 was still in Kazakh medium school and added Mandarin Chinese as a subject and then shifted to pure Chinese medium. Similarly, Murat had the same case of bilingual education which will be presented later in detail. However, in Anar's 12 school years, Chinese was medium of instruction and the Kazakh language was a subject which was commonly recognized as a bilingual school.

In respect to their language use in China, all eight participants stated that they lived in an extensively Chinese-speaking environment, and overwhelming majority of them used to speak Mandarin Chinese more frequently than Kazakh. Even though Kazakh was used as home language in different levels, it was mixed with Mandarin Chinese in their oral speech. Generally speaking, nearly all participants reported a high level of Mandarin Chinese, and only participants who had formal bilingual education were competent in the Kazakh language.

To illustrate further the language and migration experiences of China-Kazakh returnee students, I will narrate two typical experiences of participants, Murat and Dana. According to interview data, there were two types of immigrant students: those who came alone and others

who migrated with their families. Personal experiences of Murat and Dana selected for this narrative form were aligned with these two types of migrants. I focus, in particular, on their reasons for migration and language background.

Murat's story. Murat is a second year student who migrated from China in August 2014. In China, he studied in different languages of instruction as he transferred from the Kazakh-medium school to the Chinese medium school. He was taught in Kazakh medium from pre-school to Grade 6 and at a bilingual school between Grade 7 and 9; later, he transferred to Chinese-medium school in a Kazakh grouped class. This bilingual experience between Grade 7 and 9 that he had was Kazakh as medium of instruction, and Mandarin Chinese as a subject at his bilingual junior high school. After that at his senior high school, his classes were all taught in Mandarin Chinese as he changed his school. He learned Mandarin Chinese most from media exposure at the beginning. Moreover, his parents were both Kazakh speakers, and Kazakh was most used and kept well in their home language practice. Because of this bilingual school experience and Kazakh as a main home language, he was competent in both languages, Kazakh and Mandarin Chinese.

I subsequently present some of Murat's pre-university experience to explore reasons for migration. When Murat was at Grade 10 at Chinese-medium school, his motivation for migrating to Kazakhstan was gradually framed by internal and external factors. He felt that he was isolated somehow from Chinese-speaking environment, as he had previous learning experience in Kazakh medium of instruction and he felt a strong assimilation process of Chinese education system. Murat perceived potential closure of bilingual (Chinese-Kazakh) schools as one sign of assimilation, but would not ascertain the case, and ceased to talk further. When I asked about his proficiency of Mandarin Chinese, his response was not about

education but about learning through watching television, and he had oral and written competency. Murat told me that he lived in widespread Chinese-speaking environment; he saw descriptions of every selling product written in Mandarin Chinese in the market.

Regardless of speaking environment, Murat was fond of reading Kazakh literature. Even though he transferred to Chinese-medium school, he still kept reading and encountered his ethnic Kazakh peer who had the same interest. They accompanied each other to the Internet café to search information from Kazakhstan on the weekends. They used to watch the news of Kazakhstan and interview videos of Kazakh influential leaders such as Mukhtar Shaxanov and Bekbolat Tileukhan on the Internet. One day in June of 2014, they saw an announcement of scholarship for Kazakh diaspora students to get formal degree and take preparatory course in Kazakhstani institutions of higher education. According to the broadcast, all students who have ethnic Kazakh background from abroad were applicable to study in the national universities of Kazakhstan; several universities had special course to prepare returnee students to pass the national entrance examination for higher education (Keshendi Test) to get the grant. He also told me that he would have a higher chance to study abroad in the third country through Kazakhstani educational program rather than a program in China. Scholarship and future opportunities were alluring for him. This moment of discovery of the grant was exciting for both of them, but rather influential for Murat's life. They made an agreement to leave together.

In the next step, they went home back to discuss with their parents. In Murat's family, his parents suggested him to finish the last school year first and then consider about studying in Kazakhstan. Interestingly, Murat insisted on his choice and convinced his mother first of his plans. Later on, all family members agreed to his decision and supported him as his

mother concurred with his migration. In contrast to Murat's case, his friend was not as fortunate as him. The parents of that boy rejected his ideas due to fear assumed by Murat. In a new country, parents of his friends thought that it was not safe and worries stopped them from supporting him.

Murat and his friends had both watched news and found information about preparatory course together; however, the family decision led their fates into different directions. Murat resisted to parental suggestion, and pushed a lot to convince them to apply for this program. Although family influence is very important in making such big decisions, but one's personality and individual aspirations also play some part in this circumstances. Reflecting on how Murat had so strong and unique motivation to migrate and resist his parents, his internal feelings of the nation and native land might be the answer for all his attempts. He told me that when he saw blue national flag flying, and Kazakh sportsmen uphold national dignity, he got inspired to return to his homeland. He even referred to another China-born famous boxer Kanat Islam as his inspiration. In general, his internal sense of the nation and internal feelings of isolation lit up his impetus from the bottom of his heart; discourses from social websites of Kazakhstani news and potential enormous future opportunities further flamed his desire to come to Kazakhstan. Specifically, I rephrased his passion of native land as "Kazakhstani dream" which implies a strong imaginative bond to the community that he desires.

Dana's story. Dana is a first year master student who at the time of the interview had been only three months in Kazakhstani educational institutions but came for several short times during her vacations in her undergraduate degree. She went to Chinese-medium schools and finished her undergraduate degree from a Chinese university. In her own words, "I used Chinese for my entire life" which sheds light on her language background. Even though her

parents insisted to speak Kazakh at home, she found it easier to express her ideas in Mandarin when she could not explain them in Kazakh. Her parents have high proficiency in Mandarin; they use Kazakh and Mandarin as home languages, and Dana speaks English to her younger sister sometimes.

In Dana's case, family decision and her endeavor to enrich her native language played a great role in her migration story. Her family migrated to Kazakhstan six years ago. She came to Kazakhstan several times to meet her family during her undergraduate degree. Before undergraduate degree, she passed the examination and had chance to study in one Chinese university as she wanted. At that time, her family was all in Kazakhstan. Surprisingly, her family did not reject her decision of studying in China for those years. She herself had fear of new life in Kazakhstan, as she had very low language competence of Kazakh. She did not want to come to Kazakhstan back then. During four years of her undergraduate degree, she attempted to learn Kazakh in order to prepare herself to fit her future life in Kazakhstan. After graduation, she also considered pursuing her master degree in China, but her whole family rejected her thoughts. She passively accepted the decision and she had no views of her future career at that moment. However, her internal sense of being Kazakh guided her somehow, as she said that "I am Kazakh. I want to know Kazakh history and culture...and it's pretty necessary for me to learn Kazakh right now" (transcript, December, 2016).

In general, maintenance of identity and language, according to majority of participants, was the main reason for migration. As all the participants lived in a dominant Mandarin language environment, the Kazakh language was not largely used in their daily life. Kazakh as home language is often mixed with Mandarin. Moreover, ongoing assimilation can be seen from the closure of some bilingual schools in the near future, potential language loss and

Chinesation among younger generations. Secondly, three out of eight participants commented that scholarship provides an additional incentive to apply to university in Kazakhstan and studying in Kazakhstan can offer future opportunity. Future opportunity that they point out was mainly studying in an additional country during their study and/or after graduation. Moreover, some of the participants indicated that having relatives in Kazakhstan also contributed to their return to Kazakhstan.

Typical narrative stories by Murat and Dana shed the light on the experiences of returning China-Kazakh students in relation to migration and language background, and build foundation on presenting linguistic and social experiences of returnee students in Kazakhstan in the next section.

Linguistic and Social Experiences of Returnee Students

When addressing the experiences of returnee students at the Kazakhstani universities, participants provided a wealth of information on their linguistic and social experience that was encapsulated into major themes such as (a) language knowledge of Russian and Kazakh; (b) language and social interaction challenges; (c) language learning methods; (d) language attrition as consequence of migration, and (e) positive social consequence of migration. All linguistic experiences of participants will be described with consideration of language background. In this section, I present the findings of the study pertaining to the Research Question 2.

Language knowledge of Russian and Kazakh. Their knowledge of Kazakh and Russian is presented in this section. Their language competence of Kazakh is directly interrelated to their previous linguistic background. Language background as defined in two narrative stories showed that these eight China-Kazakh returnee students may have different

levels of Kazakh proficiency due to their educational background. When their educational background is based on pure Chinese-medium of instruction, participants' knowledge of Kazakh can be somewhat limited or even minimal. Some of them can be proficient in the Kazakh language due to attending bilingual schools or switching to schools with different languages of instruction.

According to participants, all of them have limited proficiency of Russian in writing and speaking skills, and majority of participants (5 out of 8) said that they hardly can understand Russian. Of importance, their levels of Russian are connected to the number of years that they have stayed in Kazakhstan. This is because another three participants who had more than two years of pre-university experiences at Kazakhstani schools can basically understand Russian; however, they cannot fluently express their ideas in Russian. Therefore, all participants were not competent in the Russian language which they hear often in their daily life.

Language and social interaction challenges. All the participants described the difficulty they had, and are having, in the Russian language. Local language environment, language levels of Kazakh and Russian, and language background pertain to their language challenge. This challenge can be seen specifically as when they commented on the language environment as Aigerim did,

Russian is more dominant here, when you go out to the stores, even in the public places. You hear Russian speakers more often. When you ask for the way, they will first speak out Russian unless you ask them to speak Kazak. Some of them can explain to you in Kazakh, and then you hear mixed Kazakh

with more Russian. (Aigerim, translation from Mandarin Chinese to English from transcript, December, 2016)

While it is a general overview of the language environment outside the classroom, it is also Russian dominant in the academic studies:

I am studying in the Kazakh medium, but my group mates always speak Russian. I don't know why. Sometimes, my professors want to speak Kazakh, but the terms, you know, like economic or financial terms, sound like Russian to me. (Dana, transcript, December, 2016)

Especially for scientific studies, majority of participants described that they had fewer resources in the Kazakh language than Russian. Murat, from bilingual background, said that “most information of technical specialty was given in Russian. Teachers would try to translate somehow. It's quite hard to understand that translated version. And it's not clear in such direct translated Kazakh version” (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016). In Russian-dominant speaking environment, all participants considered using Russian as challenging.

The Kazakh language is also problematic for majority of participants (5 out of 8) from Han-Majority schools at present. Maksat commented that “for young people who learned Mandarin Chinese before, it's hard; but for whom learned Kazakh, it's easier” (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016). Four out of eight participants described that they can use Kazakh orally, but they cannot comprehend Kazakh literature well, and sometimes misspell Kazakh words. Another fifth participant Dana, with the least pre-university experience in Kazakhstan, described that she had superficial knowledge of Kazakh in verbal communication.

In addition to Kazakh language challenge, the rest of participants (3 out of 8) who had bilingual educational experiences expressed that they had difficulty with writing Kazakh initially at years of stay. Murat said that “I learned Kazakh before, I know Kazakh well. But when I came here, I need to write with Cyrillic alphabet. You know, Chinese Kazakhs used Arabic script. Now I can write well” (Murat, translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016). Kazakh was somehow hard at the beginning for those who have some formal bilingual education in Kazakh prior to coming to Kazakhstan struggle with writing and reading due to a different script. In China, Kazakhs use Arabic script which differs from Cyrillic writing of Kazakhstan. In tandem, for those who have not studied in Kazakh at all have much more difficulty.

In general, language challenge of the Russian language is much bigger than Kazakh for all participants due to a larger issue with language environment. Dominance of Russian speakers inevitably entails others to know that language. In addition to present language challenge of Kazakh, it pertains to formal educational background of participants. For instance, participants from Han-Majority schools are linguistically challenged by the low level of Kazakh.

Language learning methods. All participants have learnt Kazakh and Russian, and are learning these two languages by different approaches. Firstly, all participants attended the language course of Russian. The Russian language course was organized by the school administration for one year, specifically for ethnic Kazakh returnee students from abroad. All undergraduate students registered for the course in their first year. According to all participants of undergraduate program, the course introduced them into preliminary Russian. Maksat said that “we learned basic knowledge of Russian, and we can simply introduce who

we are, and greet someone” (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016). Another graduate student enrolled in the language courses of Kazakh and Russian outside of the university.

Secondly, all participants described that their local peers and/or parents are instrumental in helping them with their language learning. Participants framed assistance of peers and parents as follows:

My group-mates are very kind. They helped me a lot. I appreciate them and I am so lucky. Also, when I take my class, I need to record. And then I’ll come back home and ask my mother or father. They know Kazakh better than me (Dana, from transcript, December, 2016).

Other participants concurred that their group-mates and roommates helped them to learn the Kazakh language. They were also very helpful in learning Russian in everyday communication. For instance, Maksat said, “I have a local roommate who talks to me in Russian; he wants me to learn Russian through our practice” (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016).

Thirdly, a number of participants (4 out of 8) from pure Chinese-medium educational background said that they used translation method for their learning. Beibit said that “I usually look for Chinese version on the websites first and then tried to understand the content of similar topic in the Kazakh language” (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016). Similarly, another participant, Aigerim, added that,

When we have specific theme to learn, I will first check in Mandarin Chinese. Also, when we needed to write down the lecture, I used to write in Mandarin Chinese what I understood. This is because I am not good at writing in Kazakh such as misspelling

words (translation from Mandarin Chinese to English from transcript, December, 2016).

To conclude this section, all participants tend to learn the languages through assistance from others and short-term language courses; some of participants with Chinese-medium educational background used dual translation method.

Language attrition as consequence of migration. These are unexpected experiences which were exposed by half of participants (4 out of 8). In reaching out to learning Kazakh and Russian, the participants described that they did not speak Mandarin so often and tended to sound differently from Mandarin native speakers and forgot some expressions in Mandarin. Maksat said that “sometimes when I speak Mandarin, it can be wrong expression and with some accents now because you don’t speak Mandarin every day” (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016). Language attrition might be slightly found in their description of how they used Mandarin. That is, participants have been in Kazakhstan longer and not often spoke Mandarin; their knowledge of Mandarin can diminish.

Positive social consequence of migration. As for social consequence of migration, a half of all participants (4 out of 8) expressed that they had positive changes in their personality and interaction with others. Anar said that “when I first came here, I didn’t like to talk to someone. I had introverted personality. But now, I am sociable and willing to talk to someone” (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016). Murat described his changes in this way,

I am independent now because before I thought parents would arrange everything for my future. I relied on my parents too much. But when I came here, I learned a lot, and tend to be open-minded. I make my own decision, and have my own goals. Also, I was

introvert before. I didn't know how to deal with relationship. To be honest, I developed myself a lot (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016).

Immigrant student-typed participants became independent and sociable. Another participant who had pure Chinese-medium educational background even described that speaking Kazakh to her parents at home positively affected their relationship.

Overall picture of returnee students' linguistic and social experience are facing language challenges, peer assistance in the language learning, language attrition as a consequence of migration and positive social consequence of migration. The proceeding sections are presented based on the third research questions in terms of identity and social integration as part of student experiences.

Self-identification and Social Integration

In line with the third research question, their identity and their process of social integration and future integration were highlighted. Specifically, subcategories such as Kazakh ethnic identity, dynamic national identity, identification of native language and first language, and language barrier as integration challenge will be presented.

Kazakh ethnic identity. Based on participants' description, all eight participants have clear understanding of their ethnic Kazakh identity despite of their levels of the Kazakh language and educational background. Dana emotionally said that "I see myself as Kazakh. I speak Chinese, and I use Chinese more. But it doesn't mean that I am Chinese. I am Kazakh. I live like a Kazakh. I practice Kazakh custom and traditions. And I don't even look like a Chinese" (from transcript, December, 2016). Another participant put that, "I was born in a

Kazakh family. My parents are all Kazakhs, and I am Kazakh. I am proud to be Kazakh”

(Anar, translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016).

Dynamic national identity. Main identity of majority participants is constructed in the interplay of Kazakhstani national identity. Most participants stated that they are aware of their Kazakh ethnic identity; however, they see themselves as partially Kazakhstani or not Kazakhstani yet. Anar commented that “I do not feel as Kazakhstani yet. I could not integrate to the inside, either. I have not fully adapted myself to here. Because of the Russian language, I am not familiar with here, and feel like an outsider. I hear Russian speakers around me every day, and that’s why I had such feeling” (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016).

Other types of identity were also identified by few participants that may give us full insight to understand the complex dynamic nature of their identity. Maksat introduced his dual identity as half Kazakhstani and half Chinese, within ethnic Kazakh identity. He said that “it is impossible to say that I have no connection to China. I have many friends and teachers there in China. I was born in China, and I spent my childhood there. I had good education there, thus, I can say myself 50 percent as Chinese, and other 50 percent Kazakhstani here” (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016). Another participant, Ainur, added that “China is my birth place, and I had my childhood, some friends and relatives living there. I also had joyful moments in Kazakhstan and my friends here. I could not say myself fully belonged to there or here, perhaps someone in the middle” (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016). Differently, Beibit identified himself neither Kazakhstani nor Chinese, but Kazakh.

Identification of native language and first language. All participants consider the Kazakh language as their mother tongue. Five out of eight participants who had pure Chinese educational background described Mandarin Chinese as their first language. On this point, Beibit commented that “right now I think many things in Mandarin, and I’m on the process of learning Kazakh because I don’t know many terms in Kazakh. For me, Mandarin is more comfortable to express myself” (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016). Interestingly, another two participants, Ainur and Anar, who had bilingual educational experience also said that they felt much easier to express themselves by Mandarin Chinese.

Language barriers. Social integration of these participants is related to language proficiency of Russian as the challenging factor. All participants expressed that their limited knowledge of the Russian language was barrier to their current social integration, and it was sign for future social integration and being Kazakhstanis. They also highlighted there was not big difference in the culture of both China’s Kazakhs and local Kazakhs, and only the language was challenging for them to fully integrate. Participants described in the following ways:

I cannot say myself totally integrated into the society. I have difficulty in the languages; I cannot see myself as Kazakhstani right now. Perhaps, when I can speak Russian well at someday, I will say that I am the real Kazakhstani (Beibit, translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016).

If I can speak Russian well in the future, I will give 100 percent scale for the integration. I do not see any huge difference in two places; the sole problem is in the

language (Makpal, translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016).

When people talk in Russian in the public place, I feel myself as an outsider. For instance, in a theater or concert, it is most organized by Russian speakers (Ainur, translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, December, 2016).

Generally speaking, limited language proficiency of Russian impedes successful integration of these returnee students and it can be measure of future integration. Social integration needs to be reconsidered in long-term due to language barriers.

Summary of Findings

Exploring experiences of returnee students in the higher education, and understanding the phenomenon of being returnee students require me to highlight on the common shared experience. However, according to my research purpose, unexpected experience of few participants was also meaningful and valuable to include here. Six major findings generated from analysis are listed in below:

1. All participants migrated to Kazakhstan for maintenance of Kazakh identity, and the Kazakh language in relation to ongoing assimilation in China. Other reasons for migration were related to scholarship and future opportunity, and relative bond to Kazakhstan.
2. Participants who had formal bilingual educational experience are competent in Kazakh and Mandarin Chinese; participants who had attended Han-Majority schools have good knowledge of Mandarin Chinese, but a limited level of the Kazakh language.
3. All participants face the language challenges of the Russian language at present. Specifically, language challenges vary based on their educational background in terms

of Kazakh language challenge. While participants who learnt Kazakh at school had writing problems of Kazakh at the beginning of years of stay; participants who learned Mandarin Chinese at school have difficulty of Kazakh in every aspect.

4. As part of their experiences and consequence of migration, all participants are involved in the language learning of Kazakh and Russian through different approaches; a number of participants cited slight Chinese language attrition and personal development.
5. All participants have identified themselves as ethnic Kazakhs regardless of language proficiency in Kazakh, and have clear linguistic awareness of Kazakh as native language.
6. Overwhelming majority of participants see themselves as ethnically Kazakh, but not totally Kazakhstani or not Kazakhstani yet because of proficiency of Russian. All participants had language barriers in the Russian language which made them feel not fully integrated into the Kazakhstani society.

In a summary, this chapter attempted to present analysis of data and findings based on the categories with purposefully selected quotes from participants. In the next chapter, I will interpret the findings within consideration of literatures and former research.

Chapter 5. Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the findings, which were generated from data analysis of previous chapter, with consideration of prior research. Of importance, the study sought to explore the language challenges and social integration of ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China in Kazakh medium higher education. This chapter is organized according with the following research questions' categories: reasons for migration and language background, student experiences, identity and social integration. I employed combined narrative and phenomenological inquiry approach to better answer my research questions by semi-structured interviews with eight participants. In this chapter, I will present interpretations of each finding in relation to my three research questions.

RQ1: What were reasons for migration and language background of ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China?

This research question elicited the participants' pre-migration experience to further understand their current linguistic and social experiences. The analysis of the narrative form indicated three main categories of reasons for migration: (a) language and identity maintenance in the face of assimilation in China; (b) scholarships and other future opportunities; (c) having relatives in Kazakhstan. The second half of the question links their linguistic background to current language challenges, revealing their different language competences in Kazakh.

Finding 1: All the participants migrated to Kazakhstan for maintenance of Kazakh identity, and the Kazakh language in relation to ongoing assimilation in China. Other reasons for migration were related to scholarship and future opportunity, and relative bond to Kazakhstan.

Maintenance of Kazakh language and identity was the most widely reported reason to migrate. This is consistent with results of former studies on ethnic Kazakhs. Firstly, this is identical to Cerny's (2010), Kalshabaeva and Seisenbayeva's (2013), Sancak and Finke's (2001, in 2005) and Shanatibieke's (2016) studies. The potential language and culture loss were the principal factor ascribed for migration choice (Cerny, 2010). The participants in this study used to speak Chinese more often in a predominantly Chinese language environment. Similar to the participants in Kalshabaeva & Seisenbayeva's (2013) study, they mentioned that this limited use of Kazakh raised their language awareness, and motivated them to migrate. China's assimilation policy on bilingual education was also a contributing factor to this decision. Dwyer (2005) noted Chinese covert monolingualism language policy on the education for minorities in Xinjiang which threatens to minorities such as Uighur and Kazakh. This was also observed in my participants, who described the possible closure of minority bilingual schools which would devalue their native language in the education and possibly cause language death of Kazakh among younger generations. She further commented that younger minority children in Han-Majority schools assimilated and behaved like Chinese peers (Dwyer, 2005). In my understanding, younger generations of minority group are easily influenced by Han-Majority because of language environment and prestige for future employment, and it might be the process of Chinesation in the level of education. In this study, most of participants are from Han-Majority schools which have higher assimilation possibility than bilingual schools, and this group speaks their native language in a limited way and cannot write or read. For them, to become Chinese is unacceptable, and Kazakh is the sole part of their identity which will also be explained later in the section of the third research question. This is also because that ethnic Kazakhs living in China have a strong ideology of

ethnicity and language which can also be seen in Cerny's (2010) and Bokayev et al.'s (2012) studies. Cerny's (2010) in her pre-migration studies of China-Kazakhs concludes that "they desire to maintain and strengthen their cultural identity, while assimilation into a greater Chinese identity is not acceptable" (p.240). Such language and cultural ideology of China-Kazakhs is also a pushing factor here.

In the same vein, the first reason for migration coincides with the push-pull theoretical framework. For instance, environmental factor of language, and political factors such as assimilation policy and political oppression in the sending country-China push ethnic Kazakhs to migrate to their historical homeland. This is also similar to international studies of ethnic "return" migrants (Dietz, 1999; Kulu, 2004; Zeveleva, 2014), such as social, economic and cultural pushing factors of German ethnic migration from former Soviet countries and Eastern Europe (Dietz, 1999).

The second reason for migration is scholarships and future opportunities stated by some of participants. Scholarships are given by the Kazakhstani government to support ethnic Kazakh returnee students which can be economically pulling factor of migration for China-Kazakh returnee students. Zeveleva (2014) highlights financial support can motivate ethnic migrants to emigrate. Future opportunities they perceived such as studying in the third country after graduation or during their study are also informed by human capital theory. Human capital theory is based on investment of skills and knowledge in the migration (Sjaastad, as cited in Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014). It might be most relative to immigrant students on the education chain to migration.

Thirdly, participants' migration motivation also derived from having relatives in Kazakhstan. It can be explained through migration network theory and studies of Shanatibieke

(2016) and Bokayev (2013). According to Castles et al. (2014), migration network theory explains the cause of migration by means of facilitator role of social network created by migrants in their sending and receiving countries. Migrants keep contact with potential migrants in their former lived country, and it may stimulate emigration of other migrants. For ethnic Kazakhs, it is confirmed by Bokayev (2013) that family factor importantly contributed to migration choice. The study of Shanatibieke (2016) is more concerned with China-Kazakhs. She stated that these social contacts are pride for them and it can be helpful on their emigration. This social network is large for China-Kazakhs as Wu (as cited in Shanatibieke, 2016) described “almost half of China Kazakhs have at least one relative already in Kazakhstan” (p.10). Overall, this finding of migration motivation of returnee students is consistent with other research.

Finding 2: Participants who had formal bilingual educational experience are competent in Kazakh and Mandarin Chinese; participants who had attended Han-Majority schools have good knowledge of Mandarin Chinese, but a limited level of the Kazakh language.

This finding revealed the linguistic background of returnee students from China and their knowledge of Kazakh. This is clarified in the study of Dwyer (2005) and Shanatibieke (2016). In the present study, it was defined two types of educational background: participants from bilingual schools and participants from Han-Majority schools. Shanatibieke (2016) also presented two different types of student as *minkaohan* Kazakh students and *minkaomin* Kazakhs students. According to her, *Minkaohan* students are those who “attend Han Chinese schools from elementary to high-school level and take the university entrance exam using the Chinese language” (p.14) and had limited competence of Kazakh. *Minkaomin* students are

those “who attend Kazakh schools and take the university entrance exam in the Kazakh language” (p. 14). Specifically, Kazakh schools are so-called bilingual schools. This is because Mandarin Chinese was required and included as a subject in all minority schools since mid-1990s; however, today minority language are only included as subjects and medium of instruction is Mandarin Chinese in those bilingual minority schools (Dwyer, 2005). In tandem, Dwyer (2005) stated that mother tongue-based instruction decreased into a limited transitional period and followed by Chinese-medium instruction for all minority students. This well explained the subtractive bilingual (García, 2009) educational experiences of two out of eight participants from bilingual schools. This finding also related to their current language challenges of returnee students, particular for who had attended Han-Majority schools.

RQ2: How do ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China describe a student experience in Kazakh-medium higher education?

Subcategories of linguistic and social experience as part of student experience from data are: common-shared language challenges, common-shared language learning method, slight language attrition and positive personal development stated by few participants. Even though the phenomenological descriptive analysis should look upon the most representative experiences among participants, those last two categories were worth including as consequences of migration and for future research directions.

Finding 3: All participants face the language challenges of the Russian language at present. Specifically, language challenges vary based on their educational background in terms of Kazakh language challenge. While participants who learned Kazakh at

school had writing problems of Kazakh at the beginning of years of stay, participants who learned Mandarin Chinese at school have difficulty of Kazakh in every aspect.

This finding indicated the language problems of participants which largely related to former educational background and current linguistic environment of Kazakhstan. To start with the Russian language problem, it is similar to findings of most research of ethnic Kazakh returnees (Amangul, 2013; Bokayev et al., 2012; Diener, 2005; Kuşçu, 2014). It seems to be most common to all ethnic Kazakh returnee students from non-CIS countries. Secondly, participants who had bilingual educational experience are competent in the Kazakh language and they only had writing problem due to different script. This is identical to the study of Kuşçu (2014). Kuşçu (2014) noted that writing script used in the host countries of ethnic Kazakhs can challenge their language use. However, this finding is in contrast to Cerny's (2010) conclusion of easy adjustment of writing script, especially for participants from Han-Majority schools. Five out of eight participants who had long-term Chinese-medium education in the present study had more language problems than participants who attended bilingual schools before, and it was stated by participants. They still struggle with their learning of mother tongue due to no experience of formal learning of Kazakh. At present, some participants cannot write, read fluently or think as fully Kazakh. It can be the case that formal education on mother tongue is important to their current linguistic adaptation. Of importance, difference of writing script might be a burden to language use.

Finding 4: As part of their experiences and consequence of migration, all participants are involved in the language learning of Kazakh and Russian through different approaches; a number of participants cited slight Chinese language attrition and personal development.

This finding presented common-shared language learning of participants, and language and social consequence of migration which was mentioned by a number of participants. To the best of my knowledge, there is no study to deal with language learning of ethnic Kazakh returnee students. However, it coincides with position of Pujolar (2016). He noted that devaluation of former linguistic capital of immigrants requires them to learn the new linguistic capital which also accounts for language challenge. It can be logically answered by the above-mentioned language challenges of participants which lead to learning of the Kazakh and Russian languages in order to adapt. However, not all individuals would register for the language course outside the university in practice. For instance, seven out of eight participants had Russian course for only one year in their first academic year which might be not enough for beginner levels.

Potential language attrition of Mandarin Chinese was secondly highlighted by some participants. It is somehow similar to findings of the studies of Bregtje and Schmid (2016) and Schmid et al. (2013). As for language attrition, Bregtje and Schmid (2016) point out the unpredictable and complex development of multilingual competence. Majority of participants specified Mandarin Chinese as their first language. It can be the case that participants acquired the mother tongue, Kazakh, first at home, and then learned Mandarin Chinese at school age. These later bilinguals among participants may have problems of fluency, accuracy and complexity in their verbal communication of Mandarin Chinese in their current linguistic environment. If participants do not have large exposure to Mandarin, it might be neglected in long-term.

The last mentioned social experience is positive personal development they gained in their migration. There is no specific research of ethnic returnee students; however, in

opposition to positive influence of migration, the social exclusion and disappointment of ethnic Kazakhs from other countries were confirmed by Diener (2005) and Bokayev (2013). Furthermore, it is contrast to the finding of Slonim-Nevo et al. (2006) who reported that migration experience is stressful for psychological adaptation of school-teen migrants. It might be the case that adult migrants at later migration are more capable to solve for any faced pressure.

RQ3: How do ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China identify themselves and how do they see their social integration now and in the future?

This research question looked upon identities and integration process of ethnic Kazakh returnee students from China. Subcategories for this question were: ethnic identity, identification of native language, national identity and language barrier to social integration.

Finding 5: All participants have identified themselves as ethnic Kazakhs regardless of language proficiency in Kazakh, and have clear linguistic awareness of Kazakh as native language.

This finding showed ethnic identification of participants and relation between language and ethnic identity. All participants firmly described Kazakh as native language and identified themselves as Kazakhs. This finding of the present study is identical to research of ethnic Kazakhs in the study of Bokayev et al. (2012). They write that “the notion of mother tongue does not have any duality for the repatriates because language is closely connected with ethnos, that is, language identification comes out of ethnic experience” (p.337). Furthermore, language proficiency of Kazakh among participants from Han-Majority schools was limited; participants from bilingual schools had good level of Kazakh. It appears that there is no obvious correlation of knowledge of the Kazakh language and Kazakh ethnic

identity; despite this participants had fixed sense of Kazakh ethnic identity. This finding is also similar to other international studies of De Fina (2014) and Hecht (2012). Hecht (2012) found that language itself is correlated to inter-ethnic identity for ethnic group but not the high level of language.

Finding 6: All participants see themselves as ethnically Kazakh, but not totally Kazakhstani or not yet Kazakhstani because of proficiency of Russian. At the same time, all participants had language barriers in the Russian language which made them feel not fully integrated into the Kazakhstani society.

This finding specified for the first time value integration challenges of participants in relation to language proficiency. Kazakhstani national identity is problematic due to the Russian language competence for participants, and this is indicator of low value integration. Even though this national identity framed the level of integration here, it may also reveal the relationship between language and national identity from the perspective of returnee students. That is, limited level of the Russian language impedes the integration in general, and redefined the self-identity of participants as “unreal/incomplete Kazakhstanis”. It appears that participants have clear understanding of importance of Russian in their language socialization, and this low level of Russian hinders them to fully feel as “Kazakhstani”.

Indeed, participants further positioned their sense of belongings differently; for instance, few participants mentioned dual identity (half Chinese and half Kazakhstani), or opposite to dual identity (non-Chinese and non-Kazakhstani). All participants clearly perceive themselves as ethnic Kazakh; however, for the new national identity “Kazakhstani” is ambivalent to them because of the Russian language. Participants claimed no big difference between local Kazakhs and them. Of importance, they also stated that they may identify

themselves as Kazakhstani when they will solve their language problem and achieve a good level of Russian in the future. This point is clearly close to the “context-contingently” (Joseph, 2016) perspective in relation to current and future contexts, and dynamic nature of identity. They identified themselves differently in this period of time; it may change and add one inclusive Kazakhstani identity in their self-identifications in the future. Interestingly, it also revealed the dream and reality between their pre-migration motivation and current social experience. They came here to be Kazakh; however, the reality is that they need to know Russian to be Kazakhstani. Under such context, they reconstructed their identity in different positions, and imagined to be Kazakhstani in the future if they will be competent in the Russian language.

In line with international studies on the national identity and the knowledge of language, it might be comparable to the study of Barkhuizen and de Klerk (2006), Gogonas and Michail (2015), Kulyk (2016), and Remennick (2004). In the setting of pre-migration, Barkhuizen and de Klerk (2006) observed that high English proficiency can enable Afrikaans preimmigrants to imagine and identify themselves as New Zealanders. Likewise, good knowledge of Greek stands for successful integration of second generation of Albanian immigrants in Greece; they also negotiated their inclusive identity as being Greek and Albanian (Gogonas & Michail, 2015). Remennick (2004) found new identity negotiation of Jewish-Russian immigrants in Israel which contains dual (Russian and Israel) identity. These studies presented thus far provide evidence that migrants’ high level of linguistic capital of receiving countries facilitated system integration but varied for value integration (Kreckel, 1999).

To sum up, this chapter aimed at interpreting the findings and orienting readers to understand the meaning of phenomenon of being ethnic Kazakh returnee students in the higher education. As we saw above, the chapter began with brief description of the study. Next I matched each finding to specific research questions. All these findings revealed the social and linguistic experience of participants. In the same vein, it also specified the relation between language, identity and integration in the ethnic migration context of China-Kazakhs. To my knowledge, this is the first study to explore the student experience of ethnic Kazakh returnee students. Finally, in the next chapter, conclusion for each finding will be highlighted. It will also include recommendations and future research implications.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to explore student experience of ethnic China-Kazakh returnee students in the Kazakhstani higher education in relation to language challenge and social integration. The study employed combined narrative and phenomenological inquiry approach to address the following research questions of reasons for migration, language background, student experience, identity and social integration. With the guidance of migration theories of push-pull framework, human capital and migration network (Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014), “context-contingently” (Joseph, 2016) and value integration (Kreckel, 1999) of identity construction, this study outlined the following major themes for conclusions: (a) multiple reasons for migration; (b) linguistic background and self-distinction of the languages; (c) language challenges; (d) ways of language learning and consequence of migration; (e) ethnic identity and social integration challenges. In this chapter, I provide implications of these findings, offer recommendations for further research and present my final reflection on this study.

Multiple Reasons for Migration

The first major finding of this research is that participants stated fear of language loss and Chinesation, potential benefits and kinship as reasons for their migration. A conclusion can be drawn from this finding is that China-Kazakhs in China struggle to maintain their ethnic identity and native language among younger generations; younger generations largely used Mandarin Chinese in their daily communication and low quality of bilingual education they had seem to dissatisfy the need of China-Kazakhs. This need “forced” them to migrate to their ancestral homeland to revive their heritage language. A further and related conclusion

can be drawn is that fear of language loss might emerge between the goal of covert language policy and the need of minorities.

In respect to migration theories of this context, it is possible to combine several related theories to understand the cause of migration. For example, Castles et al. (2014) argue that not theories can be used altogether and it depends on the certain context. In the migration process of ethnic Kazakhs from China, push-pull framework, human capital theory and migration network theory were found relevant and valuable to understand the cause of migration. This was also contrast to critiques of Castles, De Haas and Miller (2014) who argue that push and pull framework cannot explain the “return” migration process.

Linguistic Background and Self-distinction of Languages

The second finding is related to knowledge of the Kazakh language of participants and their former education in relation to types of medium of instruction. In the same vein, their identification of native language and first language is included in this concluding point. Participants with former bilingual education experiences know Kazakh much better than participants from Han-Majority schools. Despite of their different language competence, the Kazakh language was identified as native language by all participants; Mandarin Chinese as their first language was stated by overwhelming majority of participants. A conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that, choice of schools made certain differences of competence of Kazakh for these groups. Another conclusion is that, although all participants had high proficiency of Mandarin Chinese, the Kazakh language is ethnically closer to their linguistic identity.

Language Challenges

The third finding is that all participants have difficulties of Russian and Kazakh; however, language challenge of Kazakh differs for participants due to their former educational experience in China. Of importance, it is related to their proficiency of the Kazakh language and Arabic writing script in China. A conclusion can be drawn from this finding of Kazakh language challenge is that their school choice and different Kazakh writing script in China can impact their language learning in the Kazakhstani higher education. They made choice of formal education between bilingual schools and Han-Majority schools which certainly determined their knowledge of Kazakh such as writing skills and reading skills. A further conclusion of the Russian language challenge is that Russian is added and needed for those participants with no prior knowledge of Russian in their new living environment. It seems to be much important and hard for participants to linguistically adapt.

Ways of Language Learning and Consequence of Migration

The fourth finding is that all participants used different ways to learn Kazakh and Russian via attending courses, relying on peer assistance or dual translation. Language learning is logically connected to their current language challenges as part of solution. A conclusion can be drawn from this finding is that participants attempt to learn both languages to some extent. In respect to their linguistic and social experiences here, few participants are having slight language attrition of Mandarin Chinese and positive personal development. A conclusion can be drawn from this unexpected finding is that migration experience of participants can impact first language knowledge of later bilingual participants, and make negative and positive life changes.

Ethnic Identity and Social Integration Challenges

The fifth finding is that all participants identified themselves as ethnically Kazakh but not nationally Kazakhstani. They have different levels of Kazakh; however, the knowledge of Kazakh is probably not much related to ethnic identity for them. A conclusion of this finding is that participants have strong sense of belonging to their ethnicity. The next finding of social integration is that poor knowledge of Russian problematizes their social integration and value integration. Participants with limited proficiency of Russian encountered much challenges in the Russian-dominant speaking environment and self-identification as Kazakhstanis. Interestingly, it appears that knowledge of native language does not correlate to their self-categorization of Kazakh; new language competence (Russian) is highly linked to Kazakhstani national identity. A further and related conclusion can be drawn from this finding is that ethnic identity and national identity largely depend on the context and linguistic capital of new living country.

Conclusion Remark on the Conceptual Framework

To conclude on the conceptual framework, these concepts well oriented the present study and worked together to explain the central phenomenon. For example, migration theories investigated migration motivation of participants, and linked to their current language and social experience with the metaphor of dream and reality. Ethnic identity is connected to linguistic identity of native language; national identity is situated within “value integration” (Kreckel, 1999). All these identities came together to refine the “context-contingently” (Joseph, 2016) constructing of self-identity of participants. Along with the whole story line, language was the main chain to ethnic and national identity, social and value integration in the ethnic migration.

Recommendations

According to findings, discussion and conclusions of the study, recommendations are provided for administration staff of the university, the government of Kazakhstan, and future research.

Recommendation for administration staff. Acknowledging that the Russian language mainly challenged integration of ethnic Kazakh returnee students in the university, and importance of Russian for future employment, the recommendations put forth here for administration staff are about Russian. All seven participants from undergraduate programs had attended one-year-long language course of Russian; one master student had to attend courses outside the university. Short term of Russian language course for these students might not be enough based on their description of language problem they have at present. To the best of my knowledge, the course of the Russian language is organized for only two years which might be insufficient for low-level returnee students. Therefore, administration staff could consider investigation of long-term language course of Russian specifically for these students which can be longer than 2 years or within four years' study. It may also attract more perspective returnee students to come back to their ancestral homeland.

Recommendation for the Kazakhstani government. This recommendation is derived from participants' challenge with the Kazakh writing script. Participants from bilingual schools learned Arabic script in China; however, it was a bit challenging to adapt to Cyrillic writing. In comparison to Cyrillic script, Latin alphabet might be much easier for participants because they had learned English and know pinyin (Latin alphabet of Chinese). Indeed, older generations of China-Kazakhs used Latin script before Arabic. For all ethnic Kazakhs, it may simplify the learning of the Kazakh language and unify the Kazakh diasporas

overseas. The government may need to consider the implementation of Latin script in the near future for the quick language integration of many ethnic Kazakh students.

Recommendation for the future research. Several directions of future research generated from the limitations of the study and findings. Firstly, it is recommended to conduct comparative research studies among ethnic Kazakh returnee students from different non-CIS countries to compare and contrast them to the experiences of China-Kazakh returnee students, because they might also have Russian language problem. In the same vein, it would be useful to assess these findings in non-Russian dominant setting or different levels of education such as children migrants at secondary schools. Second, as several participants have mentioned language attrition of Mandarin Chinese, there might be the need to investigate and assess theories of language attrition among early returnees with longer residence here. Thirdly, the findings of study were not generalizable to all returnee students as it was a small-scaled qualitative study, there might be a need to conduct a large-scale quantitative study within probabilistic sampling.

Researcher Reflections

Initially the study was greatly undertaken by personal interest, as I believed it would add much effort to understand student experience of China-Kazakh returnees and support their integration to the Kazakhstani society. Through collaboration with participants, I got to know how they struggle in their language interaction with local people, how they identify themselves, how they endeavor to integrate to the Kazakhstani society, and how they try to adapt to their campus life; all these insights from the study definitely shed light on what they experience as returnee students to a certain extent. This was also my intention from the beginning of the research to understand immigrant students' experiences. According to

participants, limited knowledge of the Russian language is a burden to social integration. Therefore, long-term language course may help them to overcome the language challenge in the near future and integrate successfully. Based on this research experience and as a novice researcher, I learned how to conduct a qualitative study by interviews; I learned how to integrate the voice of participants within findings; I learned how to critically evaluate former research and interpret the findings; I learned how to deliver relevant and vital message through the research study. In brief, this study is meaningful for me as one big and important milestone of research career. I also hope this study will raise readers' awareness about the experiences of China-Kazakh returnee students.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Background information:

1. What year are you?
2. In which program? Undergraduate or post-graduate program?
3. Do you have state grant? /do you receive monthly stipend?
4. If no, are you self-paid?

Issues related to ethnic migration

1. Are you citizen of Kazakhstan or China?
2. If you are a citizen of China, have you got oralman status or Green Card (ıxtıyar xat/ ықтияр хат)? Are you applying for Kazakhstani citizenship? Or, do you have plan for application of citizenship?
3. If you are citizen of Kazakhstan, did you have oralman status before?
4. When did you immigrate to Kazakhstan?
5. Did you come here alone or with your family members?
6. If with your family members, who decided this issue? What are reasons for you to immigrate to Kazakhstan?
7. If you came here by yourself, what are reasons for you to immigrate/come to Kazakhstan?

Language background:

1. Before higher education, have you ever attended at a secondary school or a preparatory course in Kazakhstan? All in the Kazakh language?
2. How do you understand the language environment of Kazakhstan?
3. What is your level of Kazakh and Russian? How do you know these languages? Do you face any problems with languages?
4. Do you know other languages? What is your level of that language/those languages? How do you know that language/these languages?
5. What is your native language? What is your first language? In which language you are most fluent or comfortable?(article “I speak five languages”)

Students' experience:

1. How do you find studying in Kazakh in the universities?
2. Who are your friends? Where are they from? How close do you feel to them?
3. What about your groupmates? Are they Russian speakers or Kazakh speakers? Do you get along with them? How much time do you spend time with them out of class? In which language do you communicate with them?
4. Where do you live? In a dormitory or at home?
5. If in a dormitory, in what language do you communicate with others? How does it affect your language development and social communication? How does it affect your social life?
6. If at home, what language do you communicate? How does it affect your language development and social communication? How does it affect your social life?
7. Which language or culture is much closer to you?---- Is there any language or culture that you feel closer connection?
8. Do you see yourself as more Kazakh, more Chinese, international or someone else?
9. How much do you feel Kazakhstani? (1-10 scale question) For what reasons?
10. Is there anything about experience here in the university that you want to share which I haven't asked?
11. If I have any additional questions, can I contact you again?

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Language challenges of Kazakh returnee students from China and their social integration in Kazakhstani higher education

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research study on exploring the language problems and challenges of Kazakh returnee students from China and their social integration. You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one face-to-face interview between you and the researcher at a public place of your choice. The interview will be semi-structured with open and closed questions, will be audio recorded in recording device and will later be transcribed for data analysis. Data from records will be analyzed in the final report and findings will be shown at scientific meetings. After completing thesis work, tapes will be permanently destroyed. You might be invited to participate in a follow-up interview if the researcher has further questions.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately 30-60 minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The risks associated with this study are as such sensitive issues of past experience which might stress the participants. If any question is sensitive, you may choose not to answer. The benefits which may reasonably be expected to result from this study are contribution to the society to fully understand the ethnic Kazakh returnee students' experience in Kazakhstani higher education. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your grades in school.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your **participation is voluntary** and you have the **right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate.** You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, Bridget Goodman, bridget.goodman@nu.edu.kz, +7 7172 694950.

Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at +7 7172 709359. You can also write an email to the NUGSE Research Committee at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ЗЕРТТЕУ ЖҰМЫСЫ КЕЛІСІМІНІҢ АҚПАРАТТЫҚ ФОРМАСЫ

Қытайдан келген Оралман студенттерінің Қазақстандық жоғары оқу орындағы тіл проблемалары және олардың әлеуметтік интеграциясы

СИПАТТАМА: Сіз Қытайдан келген Оралман студенттерінің тіл проблемалары және олардың Қазақстандық жоғары оқу орындағы әлеуметтік интеграциясына бағытталған зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға шақырылып отырсыз. Сізге сіздің таңдауыңыз бойынша қоғамдық жерде сіз және зерттеуші арасындағы жеке бет-бет сұхбатқа қатысуға ұсынылады. Сұхбат ашық және жабық сұрақтардан жартылай құрылымдалған болады, сұхбат дыбыстық құрылғысына жазылады және де бұл кейінірек деректерді талдау үшін жазылған болады. Жазбаларынан деректер қорытынды есепте талданатын болады және қорытындылар ғылыми жиналыстарында көрсетіледі. Толық диссертациялық жұмыстың аяқталғаннан кейін, таспалар біржолата жойылады. Егер зерттеушіде әрі қарай қосымша сұрақтары бар болса, сіз мүмкін кейінгі сұхбатқа қатысуға шақырыласыз.

ӨТКІЗІЛЕТІН УАҚЫТЫ: Сіздің қатысуыңыз шамамен 30-60 минут уақытыңызды алады.

ЗЕРТТЕУ ЖҰМЫСЫНА ҚАТЫСУДЫҢ ҚАУІПТЕРІ МЕН АРТЫҚШЫЛЫҚТАРЫ:

Зерттеу жұмысына қатысудың барысында мүмкін пайда болатын қауіп: қатысушыларға өткен тәжірибесіндегі сезімтал мәселелер әсер етуі мүмкін. Егер қандай да сұрақтар сезімтал болса, онда сіз жауап бермеуге болады. Зерттеу жұмысына қатысуыңыздың келесідей артықшылықтары болуы мүмкін: толық этникалық қазақ оралман студенттердің Қазақстандық жоғары оқу орындағы тәжірибесін түсіну бұл қоғамға үлес қосу болып табылады. Зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға келісім беруіңіз немесе бас тартуыңыз *Сіздің мектептегі бағаларыңызға* еш әсерін тигізбейді.

ҚАТЫСУШЫ ҚҰҚЫҚТАРЫ: Егер Сіз берілген формамен танысып, зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға шешім қабылдасаңыз, Сіздің қатысуыңыз **ерікті** түрде екенін хабарлаймыз. Сонымен қатар, **қалаған уақытта айыппұл төлемей және сіздің әлеуметтік жеңілдіктеріңізге еш кесірін тигізбей зерттеу жұмысына қатысу туралы келісіміңізді кері қайтаруға немесе тоқтатуға құқығыңыз бар. Зерттеу жұмысына мүлдем қатыспауыңызға да толық құқығыңыз бар.** Сондай-ақ, қандай да бір сұрақтарға жауап бермеуіңізге де әбден болады. Бұл зерттеу жұмысының нәтижелері академиялық немесе кәсіби мақсаттарда баспаға ұсынылуы немесе шығарылуы мүмкін.

БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТЫ:

Сұрақтарыңыз: Егер жүргізіліп отырған зерттеу жұмысының процесі, қауіп мен артықшылықтары туралы сұрағыңыз немесе шағымыңыз болса, келесі байланыс құралдары арқылы зерттеушімен хабарласуыңызға болады.

Бриджит Гудман, bridget.goodman@nu.edu.kz, +7 7172 694950

ДЕРБЕС БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТТАРЫ: Егер берілген зерттеу жұмысының жүргізілуімен қанағаттанбасаңыз немесе сұрақтарыңыз бен шағымдарыңыз болса, Назарбаев Университеті Жоғары Білім беру мектебінің Зерттеу Комитетімен көрсетілген байланыс құралдары арқылы хабарласуыңызға болады: +7 7172 70 93 59, электрондық пошта gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz.

Зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға келісіміңізді берсеңіз, берілген формаға қол қоюыңызды сұраймыз.

- Мен берілген формамен мұқият таныстым;
- Маған зерттеу жұмысының мақсаты мен оның процедурасы жайында толық ақпарат берілді;
- Жинақталған ақпарат пен құпия мәліметтерге тек зерттеушінің өзіне қолжетімді және мәлім болатынын толық түсінемін;
- Мен кез келген уақытта ешқандай түсініктемесіз зерттеу жұмысына қатысудан бас тартуыма болатынын түсінемін;
- Мен жоғарыда аталып өткен ақпаратты саналы түрде қабылдап, осы зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға өз келісімімді беремін.

Қолы: _____

Күні: _____

研究同意表

来自中国的哈萨克大学生在哈萨克斯坦高等学院所面对的语言问题与社会融合

具体内容：您被邀请参加一项关于探讨来自中国的哈萨克大学生在哈萨克斯坦高等学院所面对的语言问题与社会融合的研究。您将与研究人员在您所选择的公共场所进行一对一对面访谈，访谈将是半结构式由开放与封闭型问题构成，所有访谈内容将记录在录音设备，以后会将其转录进行数据分析。所分析的记录数据会在最终报告中呈现，并研究发现结果会在研讨会展示。当完成论文工作后，录音磁带将被永久销毁。如果研究人员有其他问题，您可能会被邀请参加随访。

参加时间：您将参与大约为 30-60 分钟。

风险和益处：与本研究相关的风险是若提及过去生活经历中敏感问题可能会影响参加者。如果所提任何问题属于敏感问题，您可选择不回答。这项研究可以预期合理的好处是有助于社会充分理解哈萨克移民学生在哈萨克斯坦高等学院的经历。您所决定是否参加这项研究不会影响您在学校的成绩。

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联系方式信息：

问题：如果您对本研究，其程序，风险和福利有任何问题，疑虑或投诉，请联系硕士论文主管，Bridget Goodman, bridget.goodman@nu.edu.kz, +7 7172 694950。

独立联系人：如果您对本研究如何进行感到不满意，或者您对研究或您作为参与者的权利有任何疑问，投诉或一般问题，请联系 NUGSE 研究委员会，单独与研究团队成员通话方式 +7 7172 709359.您也可以写一封电子邮件到 NUGSE 研究委员会。
gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

如果您同意参与本研究，请签署此同意书。

- 我仔细阅读了提供的信息;
- 我已获得关于研究目的和程序的全部信息;
- 我已了解如何使用收集的数据，任何机密信息将仅由研究人员看到，不会向任何其他
人透露;
- 我明白我可以随时退出研究，而无需给出理由;
- 在充分了解所有上述内容后，我同意自己的意愿，参加本研究。

签署: _____

日期: _____

Appendix C**Data Sample****Transcription of interview****December 06, 2016**

Researcher: Let's start. I need to clarify some background information about you.

Are you citizen of Kazakhstan or China?

Dana: No, Kazakhstan.

Researcher: So you already got the citizenship. Okay. If you have the citizenship, have you ever had Oralman status before?

Dana: Yeah, I think so.

Researcher: When did you come here?

Dana: First time?

Researcher: Yeah, let's say first time.

Dana: Mhn, it was long time ago. Several years ago, probably. I don't remember exact time.

Researcher: Several years ago, like ten years before?

Dana: No, 5 or 6 years.

Researcher: So, you had been here five or six years ago for the first time, and you then went back China. At that moment, you should be an undergraduate student. When you finish your bachelor degree in China, you decided to come here.

Dana: Yeah, right.

Researcher: Who made the decision?

Dana: My family's condition (decision). They are here. I have nowhere to go. I have no option; I have to come here, because my family is here.

Researcher: Could you please elaborate on it?

Dana: It's complicated. Because immigrating to a new country, everything is new...I love Kazakh, I love Kazakhstan. But thinking about my future, I refused to come here. But my family didn't listen to me. My dad, mom and sister have been living here for six years. So I have no option. When I graduated from my university, I had to come to Kazakhstan.

Researcher: So right now, are you in the Kazakh medium, or English one?

Dana: In Kazakh medium, but they always speak Russian. I don't know why. Sometimes, my professors want to speak Kazakh, but the terms, you know, economic or financial terms. I don't know, it sounds like Russian to me. Indeed I know nothing about Russian.

Researcher: It's fine as you are a newcomer here.

Dana: Yeah, I'm happy now because I need to learn Kazakh right now. I am Kazakh. So it's pretty necessary.

Researcher: The reason why you came here, you said that it was family decision. Besides that, is there anything else that pushes you to come here? Is there any kind of desire or attempt?

Dana: Of course. One word, I am Kazakh. I want to know Kazakh history and culture, how my nation's country (homeland) live here, and are they speaking Kazakh? And what's the difference between Kazakhstan's traditions and Chinese Kazakh's traditional like customs, culture and everything. I am curious but afraid.

Researcher: Afraid of what?

Dana: I'm afraid of everything. My Kazakh is very poor. When I came here, I found very less people speak Kazakh. They all speak in Russian. So, it's really big shock for me...